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April 13, 1880.

Vol. VI.

Single
Number.

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY BEADLE AND ADAMS,
No. 98 WILLIAM STREET, NEW YORK.

Price,
5 Cents.

No. 142.

Handsome Harry, the Bootblack Detective.

BY CHARLES MORRIS,

AUTHOR OF "WILL SOMERS," "PHIL HARDY," "PICAYUNE PETE," "DETECTIVE DICK," ETC., ETC.



HE WAS BENDING OVER AN OPEN CASKET ON A TABLE, FROM WHICH HE TOOK IN SUCCESSION SEVERAL JEWELS, WHICH SEEMED TO HARRY'S UNACCUSTOMED EYES OF MARVELOUS BEAUTY.

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NNE PETE," "DETECTIVE DICK," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I. THE BOOTBLACK'S DAY-BOOK.

It was a beautiful spring morning. Winter had vanished with its frosts; the winds of March had blown themselves out; the rains of April had fallen; the bright sun of early May now warmed the soft south winds.

But at the point where our story opens, the traces of spring were not visible in green fields and verdant groves, but rather in muddy streets and discarded overcoats. For six months past the street cleaners had been active in nothing except in drawing their wages, and the highways and byways of New York were decidedly in need of the broom of the scavengers.

But it is an ill wind that blows nobody good. Muddy streets are the harvest of the bootblacks, and that class of active young artisans was out in force this morning.

In the broad, slab-paved space of the City Hall park, a knot of such young gentry had gathered, boxes flung over their shoulders, many of their faces looking as if they had used them to test the quality of their blacking, but as happy as if each of them owned all of New York, and as full of mischievous tricks as a cage-full of monkeys out on a holiday.

One of them, rather better dressed and with a cleaner face than his companions, but as full of the spirit of fun as any of them, seemed to exercise a sort of control over the rest, as if force of character had raised him to a tacit generalship.

He was a good-looking lad, with bright eyes, and an intelligent expression, while the neatness with which his clothes had been mended seemed to bespeak a careful mother.

Two of the young scapegraces had got into a fight, and were pummeling each other as if noses and eyes were only made to be targets for fists.

"Looky here, Harry," cried a little Tom Thumb of a chap to the boy of whom we have spoken. "There's Bill Blunt a-peggin' it like fun into our Joe, just 'cause Joe called him a lummux—and he is a lummux, too." The little fellow's eyes filled with tears.

"Hold my box, Tim," replied the boy addressed.

"I'll settle 'em."

He walked quickly across to the fighting boys, and grasped each of them firmly by the collar.

"Now, drop it right there," he exclaimed. "This mill can't go on. Do you want to have the perleece down on ye, you cross-eyed young rats? Drop it right there, I say."

"I ain't done polishin' him up yet," replied one of the boys. "He called me a lummux, and I don't take that from no snoozer like him."

"S'pose he did. You just called him a snoozer; won't that square it up, without smashing one another's noses?"

"We're a-goin' to have it out!" cried the other savagely. "Just you let go my collar, Harry Hunter, or I'll rattle into your affections next."

He was as large a boy as Harry, but the latter did not seem much scared by this threat.

"You'll rattle into me, will you?" he rejoined.

"Look here, Bill, you know I'm not a fighter or you wouldn't say it. If I was a bruiser like you I'd just shake you till your teeth rattled—this way;" and suiting the action to the word he shook the young belligerent as if he had been a leaf in his hand, till it seemed as if he would shake him out of his clothes.

"That's what I'd do if I was fond of a mill. And I'd catch you by the collar—this way; and by the breeches—this way; and I'd lay you out on the grass to dry—this way."

And in a minute Bill Blunt, very much astonished, found himself flying head foremost over a bench, and bringing up with a surge on the soft grass of the inclosure.

"That's just to show you what I'd do if I was a fighter—which I ain't," continued Harry, walking away.

"Bully for Handsome Harry!" screamed the other boys, in delight. "He's the chap to rattle them down. You get off the grass, Bill. Don't you see the sign? Nobody ain't allowed to get on the grass in these here diggin's."

Bill gathered himself up, shook himself to see if there was anything loose, and crept off, crestfallen enough, though there was something savage in the look which he cast toward his athletic antagonist.

But without paying further attention to him Harry resumed his box, while the little fellow who had held it capered around him in delight.

"Oh, my, Harry, if you ain't a daisy!" he exclaimed in admiration.

"That's all right, Tim," returned Harry. "I'm square up for peace and quiet, you know. Only, Bill's been gettin' a little too much crow in him for this barnyard. He wanted his comb cut a bit."

"You're just an out-and-out daisy!" repeated little Tim. "An' he's a lummux, just as Joe said."

But Harry had other business on hand just then, and left little Tim to his admiration. He had caught sight of a pair of very muddy boots approaching, on the feet of a well-dressed individual.

"Black your boots, sir?" he cried, whipping his box from his shoulders. "Polish 'em up! Shine 'em up! Put your foot right here. I'll give you a boot

you could see to shave in, before a butterfly could flirt his wing."

The person addressed stopped, and looked superciliously downward.

"I am afraid there is more talk than there is work in you, boy," he said. "I don't like so much tongue."

"Try me, that's all," returned Harry. "Just let me get my double-distilled, high-pressure polish on them boots, and if you don't think there's been a mistake, and that you're somebody else than you thought you were, then I won't charge you a red for the job; that's me."

"That will do," returned the gentleman sternly. "Don't flatter yourself that impudence is smartness. You may go on, if you can hold your tongue." He placed a muddy boot on Harry's box, and glanced at him with a disdainful look which the boy did not relish.

"Wonder if he's King George, or the Prince of Wales?" muttered Harry to himself, as he brushed away at the boot. "Puts on as much style as if he was Emperor of China. Got half a mind to take him down a peg."

He brushed diligently away at the somewhat large boot, keeping silent with some difficulty, for speech flowed as readily from his tongue as water from a spring.

"Hurry up, there!" cried the gentleman, impatiently; "I can't stand here all day."

"And do you s'pose a fellow's goin' to get over a side of leather as quick as he would over a baby's shoe?" retorted Harry, angrily, for he prided himself on his quickness. "There ain't a boy around the Hall can beat me on a polish; but, when we take in wholesale jobs, we expect to have time to get over 'em."

Harry's words elicited a laugh of derision from the other boys, several of whom were looking on.

"What do you mean, you impudent young hound?" asked the gentleman, his face flushed with anger.

"Nothing much," returned Harry. "Wholesale business is one thing, and retail's another; that's all. There wasn't never a trotter yet that could get over a two-mile course in one-mile time."

"Confound you," exclaimed the irritated customer, whose boots were now shining brightly. "Do you suppose I came here to listen to your impudence, which you call smartness?"

He kicked the box fiercely away, and started to walk off.

"Hold on, there!" cried Harry, running after him, brush in hand. "It's cash in this 'stablishment. We don't charge no bills. Just please fork over."

"What do you want?"

"I want the spondulicks for that job. Planked right down here," and Harry held out his open hand.

"Do you fancy that I am going to pay you for your impudence?"

"I s'pect you're goin' to pay me for my polish. The impudence is fung in, free gratis, for nothing."

"I think we will let the impudence stand against the polish," retorted the gentleman, looking at Harry with a smile of triumph. "You've had your fun. It's my time now."

"And you ain't goin' to plank down?"

"I think not."

"And you want me to charge it in my books?"

"Yes, if you keep a set of books."

"All correct," said Harry. "I'll charge it in the bootblack's day-book, so that you won't forget that you're owing me for one polish."

In an instant the brush which he held in his hand, well supplied with blacking, was daubed against the knee of the gentleman's light-colored pantaloons, leaving an unsightly black blotch.

"That's charged up now," cried Harry, as a roar of jeering laughter broke from his companions.

"Guess I won't stop to polish it."

In an instant he was off at full speed, grasping his box as he passed it, and shooting like a deer around the corner of the marble building near which they stood.

The gentleman stood dumbfounded, looking down at his disfigured knee, while an expression of savage anger came upon his dark face. He bit his lip in impotent fury as the boys continued their jeers.

"All right, my lad," he fiercely ejaculated, as he walked away. "There are more days than one. I will pay you for this."

Meanwhile Harry, with his box flung across his shoulder, walked gayly away, his face wreathed with smiles.

"Wonder if he thought bootblacks was dogs?" he queried. "Maybe next time he'll look out a little for his own tongue. It's all impudence when it comes from a boy, but it's all peritiveness when it comes from a man, I s'pose. Only boys don't always see it that way."

"Hey, Harry, are you open for a job this mornin'?" called a cheery voice near him.

Harry turned quickly, to see a well-dressed, genial-looking young man, who stood just behind him.

"Good-morning, Mr. Livingston," returned Harry, politely. "I am always ready to give you a polish; you know that. Hoist up your foot on my box, and see me make the mud fly."

The boy went to work with a vim which he had not shown in his former job, brushing away as if life and death depended on his dispatch.

"There; that will do, Harry," said his smiling customer. "The other, now."

"No, it won't do, neither," cried Harry. "Ain't got the double-distilled polish on yet. S'pose there ain't no artists in boot-blackin', as well as in other lines? Just you hold still."

The young man laughed, and pushed his hand carelessly into his pocket. But, suddenly, a marked change of expression came upon his face. He hur-

riedly felt in all his pockets, biting his lips with an expression of chagrin.

"By Jove! Can I have forgotten it?" he muttered. "Well—of all the awkward mistakes—and I don't see how I can go back."

"There," said Harry, tapping his box. "That's a job a fellow might be proud of. That's artistic, right out from the shoulder. Look at them shoes, sir."

"Yes; very good," replied his customer, abstractedly. "Ha!" he quickly continued, as his eyes rested on Harry. "A good thought. I wonder if I could trust him?"

"Trust me, do you mean?" asked Harry. "Just lay down a heap of gold dollars here, and see if you can't. I bet no dog, that don't know what money is, could watch 'em closer."

"Do you know New York well, Harry?"

"Try to lose me about this town, and you'll see if I don't."

"And would you mind doing an errand for me?"

"Out with it, Mr. Livingston. I'll do any thing for you."

"Then you must be quick as lightning, for there is not a minute to lose. You will take the Elevated Railroad and go out to Harlem; then—but can you read?"

"I rather reckon so."

"Here are the directions then," hurriedly writing. "Go to this street and number, and ask to see Miss Gordon. Don't be put off, mind; you *must* see her in person, and hand her this note." He gave Harry a note he had quickly indited.

"That down," answered Harry. "What else?"

"She will give you a package, with which you are to return as quickly as possible. You will find me at—but I had better write that direction too, to make sure. Remember, my boy, that this is a matter of the greatest importance. You must let nothing detain you, in going or returning. I would go myself, but that is impossible."

"I'm your race-horse," cried Harry. "Don't you worry a skiver. I'll do all that's in the wood; you can bet high on that."

CHAPTER II.

WHAT HARRY SAW THROUGH THE WINDOW.

A RIDE on the Elevated Railroad was a new experience for Harry Hunter, whose profession of boot-black had so far made him use his own shoes for vehicles, and the shoes of his patrons as a means of livelihood. He had not been accustomed to such rapid traveling as this, and to say that he enjoyed it would be putting it rather mild.

He simply luxuriated in it, leaning back on the soft-cushioned seats, and watching the long rows of houses which swept in stately procession past him, with a sense of pride in himself, and in the city which was honored by his presence.

"If this ain't high old getting over ground, then you can bang me!" he soliloquized. "Shootin' through New York like a sky rocket, or a forty-horse-power balloon! And only the price of a polish for a run from down town clean out to Harlem! Guess I'll charter this old team. And, just to think I've lived all this time, and didn't know what old fun it was up here on the Elevated! Well, folks has got to live and learn, that's sure."

He leaned back with an air as if he had already lived as long as Methuselah, and was only now beginning to find out what the world was made of.

On and on they shot, stopping at station after station, passing Central Park, and darting on into the benighted regions beyond it at an elevation that made Harry dizzy.

"I wonder if we're goin' to cut loose from the ground altogether?" he muttered, as the bottom of the valley over which the road now passed seemed dangerously distant. "I didn't pay for a balloon ride, and I ain't got no fancy fer goin' to Heaven by railroad; so I wish they'd p'int the old machine down ag'in. But, my stars, if there ain't a big slice of all creation spread out yonder."

It was indeed a fine view of upper New York city, of its girdling rivers, and of the inhabited hills beyond, which lay spread out before Harry's admiring eyes, and which roused the artistic taste which lay dormant in his soul.

"I bet high this ain't my last holiday on the Elevated," he said, in a satisfied tone. "But, where's the tarnation long road! Seems to me as if we'd been six hours now, and had come a hundred miles."

At this moment the train slackened speed, and soon halted at the terminus of the road. Harry got up with some dissatisfaction, and followed his fellow passengers down the long flights of stairs. He would have liked to go on with about six hours more of this new and pleasant experience.

"It's better than gettin' down on your knee-bones and scrubbin' away at some chap's muddy trotters," he muttered. "But whereabouts am I now? I must get my bearings."

But New York was too much of an old song to Harry for him to be long astray in any part of it. It was not two minutes before he was making a bee-line for the point to which he was accredited.

It was some two miles distant from the terminus of the road, part of the way along settled streets, part across fields, or over rock-strewn hollows. But it was a beautiful, warm sunny day, and Harry enjoyed the walk hugely.

He soon neared the house in which he was to find Miss Gordon. It was a thinly-settled district, very near the banks of the Hudson, which flowed here in a broad stately tide, as if proud of the throng of vessels and throbbing steamers that ruffled its liquid plain.

"There's the house now," exclaimed Harry, and Jerusha, but it's a ripper! Brown stone front near as broad as the City Hall, and two genuine stone lions on guard duty at the front door. And sich a gard-

ing! with a sensible railin' that a feller can smell the roses through. Miss Gordon must be twice as rich as a Jew—and I don't mean a Chatham street Jew, neither."

Harry knew only one way to get into a house, and that was always by the stateliest entrance it possessed. Area gates were not made for young gentlemen of his position in life.

In response to his ring a nobbly-dressed servant appeared at the door, with his chin in the air, and his eyes bent upward at an angle of forty-five degrees. A single glance at his supercilious air roused some of the spirit of mischief of which Harry had no slight share.

"Miss Gordon live here?" asked our important young messenger.

"Yas," answered the footman, who had now got his eyes down to Harry's level.

"All right. Make yourself active, and tell her there's a gentleman waitin' to see her on important business. And, mind you say important with a big R. Just roll it out lively."

The astonished servant surveyed the speaker as if anxious to make out what new species of animal this was. His chin went higher yet in the air.

"Miss Gordon don't see any beggars," he replied. "Get away now."

"See here, sonny," cried Harry undauntedly. "Don't say beggar to me again, if you aren't wanting that lofty nose of yours barked. I've got to see Miss Gordon instanter; and you'll know the reason why if you don't stir yourself. Absquatulate now."

The footman looked for a moment as if he would have liked to annihilate this saucy visitor. But wiser second thoughts soon came to him.

"Very well," he said. "I will tell Miss Gordon that there's a young gentleman waiting to see her. What name shall I say?"

The insolence of the footman's tone was quite a match for Harry's impudence. But our young friend was equal to the occasion.

"Say it's Harry Hunter, bootblack. And you can say bootblack just as if you said lord, or duke, for it's an honest business, and that's as much as a lord's is. Tell her I've got a note for her which must go in her hands quick as lightning; or quicker."

The footman turned on his heels, shutting the door carefully behind him.

He was back again in a very few minutes.

"You are to send the note up to Miss Gordon," he said curtly.

"I don't know 'bout that," was Harry's doubtful response. "I was told to give it into her own hands."

"You will give it to me, or go about your business," replied the servant. "And I can't spend my time here all day, talking with a bootblack."

"You might talk with worse company, and then be talking to your betters," retorted Harry, as he reluctantly drew the note from his pocket. "Here's the letter, then; and see that she gets it straight off, or you'll maybe find yourself in hot water afore you know it."

"See here, boy," exclaimed the angry servant, "if there's any more of this impudence, I'll tumble you head-foremost off the steps. I won't stand it."

Harry's intended retort was prevented by the approach of a gentleman, who at that moment mounted the steps. He stopped with a surprised air.

"What is the matter, James?" he asked.

"This young chap has brought this note for Miss Gordon. And his tongue is a good deal too lively for his size."

"Oh! I suppose it's all right, James," said the newcomer, glancing at the superscription of the note which the servant held.

On seeing it, however, his face changed color. With a quick movement he took it from the footman's hand, and looked at it more closely.

"I am going in to see Miss Gordon," he said, in a voice in which a quick ear might have detected unquiet. "I will take it up to her."

"I didn't give it to you to take up," cried Harry, boldly. "You aren't Miss Gordon's servant, are you?"

At these words the gentleman, for the first time, turned to look at the messenger, and Harry got a good look at his face. An observer would have been amused at their sudden change of expression. Harry backed, step by step, his eyes riveted on the face of the other.

"By cats and dogs, if it ain't the skulk that done me out of the price of a polish!" he ejaculated, as he noted the stern face, small, deep-set eyes, and long moustache of the man before him. A savage expression came upon the face of the latter.

"Ha! I've caught you already, my street rat!" he exclaimed. "I will leave my mark on you, now."

He made a quick leap for Harry. But the latter was too alert to be caught so easily. One bound took him to the foot of the steps. In another instant he was off like a deer along the garden wall, quite distancing his pursuer. The latter turned back after a minute, finding it quite impossible to overtake the agile boy.

"Come back for your answer to the note," cried the pursuer, fiercely. "I will give it to you with good interest."

Harry looked on at a distance with chagrin, as his enemy entered the house, and closed the door behind him.

"If this ain't rich, then there's no use talkin'," he soliloquized. "What will Mr. Livingston think of me now? If I could only get in to where Miss Gordon is he wouldn't touch me afore her, and I'd get my answer. But I can't get in past that galoot of a servant."

Harry's eyes were roaming about busily as he spoke. He took in the front and rear of the house,

the height of the garden railing, and all other perceptible details.

"There's only the one thing for it," he muttered. "I'm a-goin' to get in that house, if I be took for a burglar the next minute. It won't do to say that Handsome Harry was dished by a slab-sided rascal mean enough to cheat a bootblack out of his fees."

No sooner said than done. A stone wall of three feet in height, and five feet of iron railing, were slight obstacles to the agile lad. He went over them almost as quickly as a monkey could have performed the same feat.

The garden was chiefly laid out in flower-beds. But it had numerous trees, and some walks shaded by high bushes. Along one of these the interloper cautiously made his way.

Arrived at the rear of the mansion, he stopped to reconnoiter. Voices were audible in the kitchen, of which the back door stood open. But at the side of the house, near which Harry stood, there were no signs of occupancy. The shutters of the basement floor were closely bowed. But on the first floor, above his head, there was a window open, with the inner curtain partly raised.

Up the side of the house, close to this window, ran the stem of a strong vine, which branched out over a shading arbor higher up.

Harry looked at it an instant.

"I can shin that," he said.

Without a moment's further hesitation or reflection, he had grasped the vine, and was going up it hand over hand, as alertly as any old sailor. The sturdy vine groaned with his weight, but did not give way.

Reaching the level of the window, he swung himself around, and looked into the apartment from which it opened.

What was his surprise to see there his late pursuer, engaged in a very suspicious action. He was bending over an open casket on a table, from which he took in succession several jewels, which seemed to Harry's unaccustomed eyes of marvelous beauty.

"This solitaire," muttered the visitor, holding up a flashing ring. "I will never be suspected, and I can make good use of this. Livingston was here this morning, and the jewel-case must have been exposed then."

He suddenly paused, in a listening attitude. The next moment he hastily closed the casket, slipped the stolen ring into his vest pocket, and stepped quickly to the wall, where he seemed to be intently admiring a picture that hung there.

The door opened, and a young lady entered. Or an angel rather, as she seemed to Harry's admiring eyes, for she appeared to him to be too beautiful to be a mere earthly creature. Her delicate complexion, finely-cut features, soft and full eyes, and masses of rich brown hair, were relieved rather than heightened in their beauty by the shimmering folds of her amber-hued silk dress. She walked into the room with a dignified, yet easy and graceful movement.

"Mr. Stanway," she said.

The visitor turned, with a gesture of surprise. "Excuse me, Miss Gordon; I was so taken up with your new picture that I did not notice your entrance. It is a beautiful piece."

"I hardly see how you can tell that, in this vague light," she replied, with a slight ripple of musical laughter. "Wait till I raise the curtain and let more light in on it. I think it fine."

As for Harry, he concluded not to wait. There were two ways of descending the vine before the young lady should get to the curtain. He chose the quickest, let go his hold, and tumbled headlong on the soft sward of the garden.

Let the noise of this hasty descent should alarm the house, he crawled quickly into a dense bush near him, and lay concealed from sight and hearing.

CHAPTER III.

ALICE GORDON'S LOVERS.

WHILE these events were progressing Mr. Edward Livingston proceeded from the point of his meeting with Harry, making his way into the intricate plexus of streets which form the lower part of New York city—the nose of the city, if we may call it so, pushed out into seething waters of the bay.

Turning into Beaver street he made his way along that avenue sacred to trade.

"I never did anything before quite so awkward," he muttered. "To forget that document at a crisis like this! It might endanger all, if these men were disposed to be obstinate. That comes from being taken prisoner by a woman's eyes. Alice Gordon has my sin to answer for."

He walked on slowly, looking occasionally at the numbers of the stores. He seemed seeking a particular locality.

"I wonder if I can trust that boy?" he continued. "I should have gone myself, but I must be present to soothe their agitated souls until my messenger arrives. It is decidedly an awkward fix.—Ah! here is the spot. Price and Company.—Now for my plunger."

Entering the doorway of a dingy-fronted but huge mercantile establishment, he made his way to the second story, and entered a large room, furnished as an office, and occupied by some twenty individuals, in whom his coming seemed to relieve a feeling of suspense.

"You are late, Mr. Livingston," said one of these, a large-framed but sharp-looking personage, who occupied the seat of honor, at a high desk in the front of the room.

"It is only ten," replied Livingston, calmly, glancing at his watch.

"Ten minutes after, sir," retorted the other, taking from his pocket a magnificent gold-repeater. "A man of business should carry a correct time-piece.

Ten minutes each to twenty merchants is two hundred minutes. Just three hours and twenty minutes wasted for us because you choose to be careless about your watch."

"Your arithmetic is very good," returned Livingston, a little vexed. "Each of you has lost ten minutes reading of the *Tribune* or *Herald*; for which I am duly sorry. But you must excuse my delay. Had we not better proceed at once to organize the meeting?"

"We are organized, sir," responded another of the merchants. "Will Mr. Gordon be present?"

"He is utterly unable to come," was the reply. "He is quite prostrated, and under the doctor's care. But his presence will not be necessary."

"No," returned the first speaker. "If you have the articles of agreement duly signed and witnessed, I think we can excuse his attendance."

This remark precipitated matters with Mr. Livingston. He was forced to the disagreeable necessity of explaining how he had left behind him this important document, but that he had sent a messenger in all haste to obtain it, and that it would be there by noon at the latest.

An outcry of angry excitement was aroused in the assembly by this information. "Unpardonable!" "A ridiculous excuse!" "I, for one, shall not wait," and a dozen other such exclamations came from the buzzing throng of vexed merchants.

Mr. Livingston did his best to try and soothe the angry gentlemen, and to keep them from dispersing until Harry should arrive.

"I acknowledge all my carelessness," he exclaimed. "But in any case there is an hour or two's work before us. There are a number of points of importance to consider, and we will be fully occupied until my messenger arrives."

"There is nothing we can't settle in ten minutes," ejaculated the chairman.

"Don't you imagine that," replied Livingston, coolly. "You won't find it as easy to bring twenty men to one way of thinking as to move a shipment of sugar. Let us to business, gentlemen."

The business to be done was really but the settling of some minor points, but Livingston shrewdly managed, by opposition and adverse arguments, to protract the discussion, and to occupy the minds of the merchants by stirring them up to eager argument.

It had been too difficult to get them together to let them separate until the missing paper was duly executed. The fortunes of the wealthy merchant, George Gordon, rested upon his skill during these two anxious hours.

But, meanwhile, the fortunes of George Gordon were being imperiled by circumstances quite beyond his control. All was not going well with Harry Hunter in his errand. The fates which had sent him Stanway there at that unlucky moment seemed about to prove disastrous.

We must return to the room in which we left Miss Alice Gordon and her visitor. She had just crossed the apartment to raise the curtain, as we have seen. But, as her hand touched the chord she gave a slight start of surprise.

"What was that?" she exclaimed, as a hollow thud sounded beneath the window.

Mr. Stanway quickly crossed to her side, raised the curtain, and looked out.

"I see nothing there," he said.

"And yet it sounded as if something had fallen. I must have been deceived in the direction of the sound."

As she stood with slightly-parted lips and flushed cheeks, looking through the open window, Mr. Stanway gazed upon her with undisguised admiration. Evidently he was deeply smitten with the beauty of his fair hostess.

"I called principally to inquire as to the health of Mr. Gordon," he explained, as she returned to him. "I hope he has had a good night, and is better this morning."

A sad look came upon the face of the beautiful girl, as she slowly shook her head in response.

"He is still very unwell," she replied. "I am in hopes, however, it is nothing more than a severe nervous shock, and that rest will prove the medicine he needs."

"Rest of mind," added Mr. Stanway. "We are doing our best to settle this business trouble. If we have satisfactory success it will certainly relieve him."

"God send that you may!" she fervently responded. "You have my earnest thanks for your kind efforts. Is that note for me?"

"Oh, yes! I had forgotten," he exclaimed, glancing at the note which he had been holding partly extended toward her. "There was a messenger boy on the steps with it as I came up. I told James that I would hand it to you."

She tore it open, and glanced quickly over its penciled contents.

"How provoking!" she exclaimed, in a tone of vexation. "Mr. Livingston has left behind him the document which he was to take in to the meeting this morning. It was partly my forgetfulness, too. I hope it will occasion no trouble. It must be sent without a moment's delay," she cried excitedly.

She was already at the door of the room.

"James," she called.

"Yes, um," came a voice from below, and in a minute more the important footman appeared.

"Is the boy who brought this note still waiting?" As she spoke James's eyes had wandered from her face to that of Mr. Stanway. A peculiar warning look was upon the latter.

"He ain't, mum," replied James. "He went right away."

"That is too bad! He should have waited. See if you can overtake him, James."

"Yes, um."

"There is no need of that," said Stanway, quietly. "I am going immediately into the city, and will take it in for you."

"Will you?" she exclaimed, her face lighting up with a look of joy. "I will be ever so thankful to you. That will do, James. Excuse me one moment, Mr. Stanway. I will get it."

She hastened from the room, in a silky gleam, as her shimmering dress swept across the broad beam of sunlight.

"Good!" he muttered between his teeth. "I am getting the game in my own hands. It is now or never. If she refuses me now I will ruin her father, and we will see then if my lady keeps her pride. As for Ned Livingston I have him under my thumb, too. He won't stand so well in her good graces if this stolen ring is traced to him."

He took the ring from his pocket, held it in a flash of the sunshine, but dropped it again as he heard her returning step.

"It is true," she excitedly exclaimed, on re-entering. "He did leave it behind him. It is here, Mr. Stanley. I hope you will make all haste."

There was a peculiar expression on his face as he took the document from her extended hand. To her surprise he retained her hand in his. She flashed up a look of inquiry in which was mingled some displeasure.

A single glance at the expression of his face, and she withdrew her hand with a somewhat hasty movement from his close grasp.

"Pardon me, Miss Gordon—Alice," he quickly said. "I know this may seem an inopportune moment to address you on any but the one subject. But I cannot restrain my feelings at will. I need not say that I love you, nor how deeply I love you. I have spoken on this subject before, and you have given me reason to hope. Oh! will you not change it now from hope to certainty—to undying surety of bliss?"

His voice had a ring which seemed that of counterfeited passion. It apparently gave her a disagreeable sensation. She drew back, with a look upon her face any thing but favorable to his suit.

"I do not know when or how I gave you any such hope," she answered, with some distress of tone. "Certainly I had no intention of raising false expectations in your mind. I beg you will cease to address me on this subject, Mr. Stanway. I wish to remain your friend; but can never be more to you than a friend."

"I cannot continue a mere friend!" he hotly exclaimed. "I must be more or less than a friend. There are passages in life at which we cannot stop—we must go forward or back. Love cannot arrest itself on the mild plain of friendship."

"You must go back, then. You cannot go forward. I need a friend now; not a lover. I pray that you will not withdraw your friendship from me because I cannot enforce my affections in your favor."

He stood with a half-sulky, doubtful aspect; regarding her with something lowering in his glance. There was a sense in his attitude of that of the tiger at bay, though it was glossed over with the polish of enforced politeness.

"Miss Alice," came a voice from the door. The attractive face of a young servant girl appeared there.

Alice seemed glad of the interruption. She hastened with a quick step to the door.

But we must go back somewhat to trace the cause of this interruption, for which Harry Hunter was wholly responsible.

We left that young gentleman closely hidden in the leafy depths of a clump of bushes, where he lay extended, awaiting developments.

His quick ears caught the words spoken by Miss Gordon and her visitor at the window. It was all right. His escapade had not been discovered.

After a minute or two he crawled cautiously out from his covert, plans of action busily revolving through his head as he did so. Gaining the wall of the house he moved slowly along it.

"I suppose it's cheapest in the long run to hit the nail square in the head," he soliloquized. "Wonder what sort of gals they've got in the kitchen? If there's a good-lookin' one there a little soft talk might come it over her—I'm goin' to try it on, anyhow."

With a bolder step he walked around the corner of the house, and approached the kitchen door. It stood wide open, and two women were visible within, one engaged in laundry work, and the other—a pretty young girl—busily paring potatoes for dinner.

She looked up with a slight exclamation of alarm, as Harry suddenly appeared before her eyes. On his side he stopped short, his eyes fixed upon her with an admiring gaze.

The older woman at the ironing table gazed quickly round.

"Who are you, and what brings you here?" she harshly asked.

"I most always come in this way," said Harry. "Coo why; I ain't got up nobby enough for your front-door gentry; and I'd any time sooner talk to a couple of pretty girls than to a stuck-up jark of a man."

"Oh! you're a fool," cried the woman, yet evidently not ill-pleased. "Just suppose you got out of here by the same way you got in."

The younger girl laughed.

"How did you get in?" she asked.

"That's my secret," said Harry, mysteriously. "I never blow on myself. Fact is I've got business with Miss Gordon, and thought I wasn't rigged spruce enough to go the front."

"Gat out, then and go to the area gate. That's the place for your kind," replied the older woman.

"Who's the use, when I'm here now, to fetch one

of you to let me in?" rejoined Harry, coolly seating himself. "Can't you go up and tell Miss Gordon there's a young gentleman here a-waitin' to see her?"

"Miss Gordon don't allow us to tell lies," said the girl. "So I wouldn't like to call you a young gentleman."

"Say then it's a polisher of young gentlemen's understandings. Say it's Harry Hunter, bootblack, and who ain't no more ashamed of it than if he was a bank president."

"Oh, you go to grass with your nonsense. I ain't door-tender, and I've got my potatoes to pare."

"Is that all?" cried Harry. "Guess you never saw me parin' pertaters. I'm just a steam-engine at that bizness. I never see a pretty girl like you with a pan of pertaters, but I always want to dive right in and pare."

Before she could prevent him Harry had taken the pan of potatoes from her lap, snatched a knife from the table, and was busily at work, taking off quite as much potato as paring at every vigorous sweep of his knife.

The two women watched him for a moment in silence, and then burst into a roar of laughter.

"Well, if he ain't a lively young rascal I never saw one," cried the elder. "You'd best go up, Sally, and tell Miss Gordon 'bout him, or he'll be tryin' to cook the dinner next."

"That's so, Sally," responded the boy, as he made the potato parings fly, "and I'm some guns at cookin', too; only I'm afeared I might scorch the gravy, which wouldn't be quite comfortable."

Sally laughed again as she left the room, to break up the interview between Miss Gordon and her would-be lover, as we have already seen.

CHAPTER IV.

LIVELY TIMES IN THE KITCHEN.

MR. STANWAY stood biting his lip with chagrin. His foot tapped the floor with an angry impatience. His downcast eye rested on the knee of his pantaloons, where there remained a trace of Harry's handiwork, though the most of the stain had been removed.

"The young hound!" he muttered between his teeth, his thoughts reverting to the boy. "See if I don't settle for him, and for his employer, Ned Livingston. Ay, and for our proud beauty, Alice Gordon. I have only to keep back this paper until the meeting breaks up, and George Gordon's ruin is accomplished. You have despised my love, my haughty young lady. We will see if I have lost my power to sting."

She continued absent, talking to the girl. With a gesture of impatience he took his hat.

"Good-day, Miss Gordon," he said, through the partly-open door. "You must excuse my haste, but every minute is important now. This document must not be delayed."

"Pardon me, Mr. Stanway," she replied, from beyond the door. "Wait one moment only."

"Wait! For what?" he said to himself, with a fierce intonation. "For you to tell me that you have thought better of your refusal of my love? No, indeed; I read your look too well to fancy that. I will not wait, I will have the credit of haste. But, for all that, I fear the meeting will not get this paper in time."

"Tell the boy to wait for a minute or two," said Alice to her servant, as she dismissed her.

"I will not be obliged to trouble you, Mr. Stanway," she continued, re-entering the room, "the messenger boy is—"

She paused, and looked around her in surprise. The room was unoccupied. Her visitor was gone.

"That is certainly a very impolite haste," she exclaimed, in a tone of displeasure. "And I cannot but mistrust this man. That he should take such a time to press his unwelcome suit! Is he truly our friend?"

She rung the bell for James.

That dignified individual quickly appeared.

"Is Mr. Stanway gone?"

"Yes, um."

"That will do, James."

"I must, at all events, send the boy to inform Mr. Livingston of what has occurred," she continued, after James had retired. "He may be able to retrieve the possible danger."

Meanwhile Sally the servant girl had returned to the kitchen. Here she found that her substitute had finished the potatoes. In fact he had almost finished them in another sense, for there was about as much potato in the dish of parings as there was in the potato-pan.

He was now seated beside the range, busily engaged in shelling peas, and occasionally giving a vigorous stir to a saucepan of some compound over the fire. While his hands were thus occupied his tongue was rattling away with nonsense to the girl at the ironing-table, whom he kept in a roar of laughter.

"And here comes black-eyed Sally, and now we'll know all about it in a jiffy," cried Harry, with enthusiasm. "Ain't Miss Gordon just wild now to see me, and wonderin' why I didn't come sooner?"

"Oh yes! dreadful wild," retorted Sally, in a disdainful tone. "I hope you don't fancy that a born lady like Miss Gordon hasn't better company than bootblacks."

"Ain't I good-lookin'?" returned the boy, as he shelled away for dear life. "Don't every one call me Handsome Harry? And between you and me, he continued, dropping his voice to a mysterious whisper, "if she knowed what brung me here, she'd be wild enough to see me, I promise you."

They were interrupted by a quick pull at the bell. But Sally had just then the hot saucepan in her

hands, its contents being in that critical state that they could not be left until after a minute or two's attention.

Thus the bell was not immediately answered. Miss Gordon, impatient at a delay which might prove dangerous, quickly descended herself to the kitchen. She opened the door with a rapid movement, and then halted with a gesture of surprise at the tableau presented.

At one side of the kitchen stood Sally, dropping salt in the hot saucepan with one hand, and stirring vigorously with the other, while her head was turned over her shoulder in some saucy reply to Harry. The girl at the ironing-table was also looking behind her and laughing, while the scorching hot iron was doing irreparable damage to ruffles and flounces.

As for Harry he was seated on one chair, with his feet on another, a deep pan in his lap, from which he was actively shelling peas out to the floor, and carefully dropping the shells into the pan, while his eyes were turned with a comical blink toward Sally, whom he had been busily chaffing.

The sound of the opening door caused an instant reversal of affairs. An earthquake could not have produced a greater convulsion than did this apparition of the astonished face of Miss Gordon in the doorway.

The hot iron slipped from the fingers of the laundress, hitting her squarely on the toes, and causing her to execute an Indian war dance about the floor, accompanied with yells of pain. As for Sally, her fingers went heedlessly into the boiling mess, scattering it about the table and floor, while she joined in the war dance of her fellow servant. Harry, the third member of the party, sprung hastily to his feet, upsetting both chairs, and sending the peas flying like billiard balls in all directions over the kitchen floor.

It was certainly a most effective situation, and Miss Gordon, despite her momentary sensation of anger, could not suppress an irresistible impulse to laugh, as she saw the two girls dancing and howling with pain; and Harry, with a sheepish look upon his face, holding the pan at an inclination of forty-five degrees, while the shells followed the peas to the floor.

"Is this Miss Gordon?" asked Harry, the first to regain his senses.

"I am not quite sure of that, or of anything just now," she replied, still laughing. "I hardly thought my coming into the kitchen would produce such a convulsion of nature. What does all this mean?"

"I have only been trying to amuse the young ladies," said Harry, again replying.

"Indeed! I should hardly care to be amused in that way," she laughingly rejoined, as she saw the older woman on the floor nursing her toes, her yells of pain being reduced to low moans; while Sally was running to dip her scorched fingers into hot water.

"If you produce such a commotion as this in all the families you visit, I should imagine that your calls would not be very welcome," continued Miss Gordon. "Are you the boy who wished to see me?"

"I'm just that boy," he replied, "Harry Hunter, bootblack, is my name and title. I come here with a letter from Mr. Livingston, and I was to take him something back from you. And I'm afeared I've been dished out of both by a foxy-eyed sort of a fellow, who is mean enough to rob an honest mechanic out of his wags."

"What do you mean?"

"Why if you'd looked at his boots this morning you'd found them to shine so that you could have seen your own pretty face in 'em. I put that polish on 'em, and he went back on me when I asked him to pay for the job. But I've got it charged up against him, and if he don't have to pay it yet, with forty per cent interest, then the boys don't call me Handsome Harry."

She looked into his bright young face, flushed with indignation and excitement, and thought to herself that the boys were not far wrong in giving him that title.

"Come this way, my boy," she said, leading up stairs into the reception room.

"Mr. Stanway has got the package you were to take," she continued. "I am sorry now that I gave it to him, as I fear it may be delayed in reaching its destination. I will give you a note, explaining the circumstance, which you must take immediately to Mr. Livingston."

"I wouldn't trust Stanway half as far as I could sling an elephant by the tail," soliloquized Harry, after she had left the room. "If I can catch up to him, I'll have that paper yet, in some way or other. But, Jerusha! ain't this high old style?"

He looked with admiration around the handsomely-furnished room, his unaccustomed eyes noting the brilliant carpet, the soft colors on the walls, the richly-upholstered chairs, with the greatest enjoyment.

"It's like walking over thick grass," he continued, as he moved gingerly along the carpet, that yielded to his tread. "And them picters! And them bronze sojers on the mantle! If such grandeur ain't just enough to take away a chap's breath, I wouldn't say so."

Miss Gordon soon returned with a note which she had written. A few minutes' conversation ensued, after which Harry was dismissed, with injunctions to make the greatest haste.

Nor was he sent away without a gratuity that was equal to a fortnight's bootblackening.

"I ain't much given to take money that I haven't worked for," he said. "But I calculate to earn this. And I know it will bring me good luck to have something in my pocket that's been touched by your pretty fingers, and looked at by your sweet face. So

I'm very much obliged to you, Miss Gordon, and you'll never find me going back on you."

A slight blush, not unmingled with a look of pleasure, came into her face at his words.

"Be off, you young flatterer," she said, smilingly. "I fear that you are learning the arts of the gallant too early."

It was something more than surprise that came into James's face as he was called to let the boy out. It was rather astoundment of the most supreme order. He could not comprehend at all how the boy had got into the house.

"Good-by, old dignity," called out Harry, as he left the door. "Best take a double reef in that nose of yours, and hang a pound weight to the corner of both them eyes, or after a while you'll have to be stood on your head every time you want to see the ground."

He was off ere his antagonist could recover from his surprise at this stupendous impudence sufficiently to reply.

It was not long before Harry again found himself in a car of the Elevated Railroad on his return trip. He walked through the train to see if he could find a car still more to his satisfaction; and in doing so he made an important discovery.

This was that Mr. Stanway was on the same train. The fact is that he had been in no haste to reach the cars, and Harry had not been many minutes behind him in leaving the mansion of the Gordons.

A new idea came into the boy's active brain. Mr. Stanway occupied a seat facing forward. The seat immediately behind it was unoccupied. This Harry boldly took, satisfied that his foe was too deeply engaged in his newspaper to notice who sat near him.

The train was soon swiftly flying onward toward the city.

But Harry did not trouble his brains now about the surrounding scenery. His mind was too closely occupied about the gentleman who sat before him, and whom he investigated as thoroughly as a pair of very sharp eyes were capable of.

There's a document sticking out of the inside pocket of his coat," said Harry to himself. "That's my game, for a brass dollar. I'm bound to have it, or somethin's a-goin' to bust."

Station after station was passed, Harry still vigilantly watching for an opportunity. Ere long they were among the down-town stations. Mr. Stanway ceased reaching, and began deliberately to fold his newspaper.

"Park Place!" cried the conductor, while the train slackened its speed.

Mr. Stanway rose and stepped into the car aisle, still folding his paper. Harry also rose and stood behind him. The car gave slight jerk forward as the brakes took firmer hold of its wheels.

Instantly the boy, as if he had lost his footing, plunged forward in the aisle, flinging his arms around Mr. Stanway, and hugging him closely, with seeming intention to save himself from falling. "Confound your awkwardness! Let go!" cried the gentleman, angrily.

"Excuse me, I tripped," said Harry, releasing him, and starting for the rear end of the car.

Something in the tone attracted Mr. Stanway's attention. He turned, recognized Harry at a glance, and with an oath rushed after him. It was a quick chase. The train was now nearly at rest at the station. The conductor opened the gate to the car platform just as Harry reached it. With his usual agility the boy leaped from the car, ran hastily to the stairs, dropping his ticket in the box as he passed, and was in an instant more going down the stairs six steps at a time, ten feet in advance of his pursuer.

And in his hand he held the important document, which he had managed to abstract from Mr. Stanway's pocket during the surprise of the latter at being so rudely grasped.

CHAPTER V.

TOO LATE FOR THE MEETING.

THE two hours which Mr. Livingston had calculated as sufficient for Harry's trip was passed, and the boy had not yet appeared. In fact, two hours were too short a time for his task, even if he had met with no interruptions. His employer's impatience had run ahead of his judgment, or he would have realized that it was impossible for the boy to be back by twelve, or even by half-past twelve.

Indeed it was not impatience only which made him nervous and uneasy. There was much more to be feared than the consequences of a mere ordinary delay, and he felt strongly the necessity of getting the signatures of the merchants present to the missing paper as soon as possible.

He succeeded in keeping them together until past the noon tide hour. But when half-past twelve arrived, and there were no signs of the messenger, they grew too restless to be longer controlled.

"This is about served out," cried the burly man at the desk, in a very impatient accent. "I am willing to be easy with George Gordon, but I cannot give up my whole day's business on account of the blunders of his agents. Everybody knows where the establishment of Jones & Brown is to be found. Bring the agreement there and you can have my signature."

"And mine," "And mine," said several of the others, as they rose and prepared to leave the room. "I hope, gentlemen, you are not going to put me to all that unnecessary trouble!" exclaimed Livingston. "After waiting so long, surely fifteen minutes, or even a half-hour, more would not matter greatly. You all know that I have no personal interest in this matter. I am acting only as Mr. Gordon's friend."

"Then we have a personal interest," retorted the

representative of Jones & Brown. "Is it not enough to sign away fifty per cent of our claims, without giving up a day's business to do it? I am not so anxious to sign as all that."

He pressed his hat sternly down over his eyes, and walked haughtily toward the door.

From the looks of the others, as well as from some words that escaped them, it was evident that they were mostly of the same opinion. Yet the impending break-up of the meeting was hindered by an unexpected event.

The door of the room was hastily flung open, and the figure of a young man appeared in the opening, his face red as with haste, a pen behind his ear, and no hat upon his head.

"Mr. Brown," he ejaculated, as soon as he could recover breath. "Have you signed?"

"Not yet, Harry," answered the burly merchant. "What is wrong?"

"There is nothing wrong if you have not signed. I only wish to announce that suit has been entered against the estate of George Gordon, in the Rochester courts, for a claim of fifty thousand dollars, of which we knew nothing. If you had signed that iron-clad paper your hands would have been all tied. As it is, the man who can push his claim through to judgment the liveliest has the best chance for his cash."

"By Jove, if that ain't rich!" exclaimed one of the merchants. "And you, Ned Livingston, have sought to defraud us in favor of this snap suit."

"It will come to nothing, gentlemen," said Livingston, firmly, but a little pale. "It is a claim that has not an ounce of foundation, as I can prove to you."

"Save your breath to cool your porridge," angrily retorted Mr. Brown. "My claim has some foundation, then, as you shall see. Harry Jones, you're a brick. Come, gentlemen, we are saved by good fortune from being made the victims of a swindling trick."

"That is false," cried Livingston excitedly. "It is George Gordon who has been cheated and ruined by swindlers and robbers. I do not blame you, gentlemen, for your hasty action, but you will be sorry for it yet."

There was an incredulous and angry look on the faces of most of the assembly, as they made their way in a mass to the door.

At no great distance from the front entrance to the building stood a young man, his shoulder carelessly set against the corner of a neighboring store. The smoke of a cigar curled slowly up from his lips, and a covert smile marked his face, as he noticed the throng of irritated merchants issuing from the doorway of Price & Co.'s store, much like the angry inmates of a bee-hive when disturbed at their work.

He turned his head away as certain more familiar faces approached him. He evidently did not care to be recognized. There was little danger of this, however; they were far too full of their own affairs to be interested in this idle snoker, whose only aim in life seemed to be the burning of a roll of dried tobacco.

But when, from the number who had come forth, it was evident that the hive must be near empty, a sudden change came upon this young gentleman. He raised himself from his lounging attitude, flung away his half-smoked cigar, and walked hastily toward the door whence they were issuing.

"What is wrong, Mr. Mason?" he cried, with an appearance of concern, to one whom he met on the stairway. "The meeting is not broken up?"

"Yes; thanks to our good luck."

"But I have the agreement," said the other.

"You can keep it, then, for cigar lighters. That is all it is likely to be good for."

The new-comer ran quickly up to the room of the meeting. It was nearly empty. Only a small group remained, talking earnestly together, while Mr. Livingston stood, his hand on the desk, looking angry, heated, and as if at an utter loss what next to do.

"Mr. Stanway!" he exclaimed, as the new-comer entered.

"What is wrong, Mr. Livingston?" asked the latter. "I was at Mr. Gordon's this morning, and have brought the agreement with all possible haste. Could you not keep them together?"

"It is all up, Mr. Stanway," returned Livingston, in an accent of chagrin. "There is a hitch in the proceedings; and the document is not worth the paper it is written on."

"You don't tell me that!" exclaimed Stanway, with evident concern. "Why, what has occurred? But here is the unlucky paper.—Ha! where is it? I had it in this pocket."

It was his turn now to be surprised. He hastily searched his pockets, one after another. No trace of the missing document was discoverable.

"Well, that is the strangest thing. It must have fallen from my pocket in the car." A sudden thought struck him, and he continued, mentally: "Aha! that boy; can he have taken it?—And the letter which I had in the same pocket!" He again plunged his hand into the depth of his pocket, and grew lividly pale as it came up empty.

Mr. Stanway turned toward the door, walking with a hasty but trembling step. His lips were bloodless. "Why, Mr. Stanway, are you unwell?" asked Livingston, anxiously.

"No, no," replied the other. "I was only vexed at my carelessness. I must go back to seek that lost paper."

"You need not. It will be of no use," added Livingston after him.

But he left the room without paying any attention to this remark.

"Well, I didn't think that Stanway was so interested in Mr. Gordon's affairs. He turned as pale as if it had been his own loss. The fact is, I would have

suspected him of feeling the other way, from some things I have seen.—But how came he with the paper? It seems that I have been especially unfortunate in my messenger."

Mr. Livingston, thus speaking, followed the last of the merchants from the room.

Meanwhile that messenger was occupied in a very different affair from that on which he had been employed. After escaping from Stanway's pursuit by plunging through several streets and turning various corners, without looking around to see whether or not he was followed, he found himself in a quieter avenue than the most of those through which he had passed.

He stopped a few minutes to recover his breath, and to dispose of the folded paper which he still held tightly clutched in his hand.

"You can score one for Harry Hunter," he said, triumphantly, as he crammed the recovered document into some inner pocket. "Guess I'll forgive Stanway that shine-up. But I ain't goin' to have him chasin' me this way every time he sees me. I'll salt him worse than ever if he tries it on again.—But I must hunt up Mr. Livingston now."

"Here he is, boys!" yelled a youthful voice at this moment. "Go for the galoot! Pile it into him!"

Harry looked up quickly at this, to see before him the identical Bill Blunt whom he had laid out on the grass that morning. He was accompanied by two other boys of his own size, and they were all three advancing belligerently upon Harry.

It was a critical moment. He had no fancy for being pummeled. One quick look around, and he hastily threw off his coat, and backed up against the side of the building near which he stood.

"Come ahead, now, my coveys," he exclaimed. "One at a time, or all together. I don't care a fig how; for I'm good enough for a dozen such gutter-snipes as you."

With a howl of anger the three young savages leaped at him, crowding in so that they impeded each other's movements. They thus were forced to strike wildly and at random. Not so with Harry. He was thoroughly cool and collected. He struck back with vim, making every blow tell. For every stroke that reached him he returned two with interest.

"File in my hearties! Tumble up!" yelled Harry, his fists working away like hammers. "Come in and give me a polish. Wipe that blood off your nose, Bill Blunt, or it will spile your dinner. Sail in, sonnies, and get your rations."

His three infuriated antagonists went at him more madly than ever, striking with too much angry viciousness for their blows to be effective. Despite their numbers Harry had the advantage of them in his backing and in his coolness.

"Look out for your nose, little one," cried Harry, tapping that exposed organ in one of his foes. "And here's to put your eye in mournin'," and he gave the third of his antagonists a settler in the right organ of vision.

"Come, you rats: what are you stopping up the pavement for?" called out a passing gentleman.

"Three on one, that's not fair," said another. "Let us separate them."

"Leave them alone," cried Harry coolly. "They're gettin' carried down. Here's Bill Blunt's rations."

His fist shot out, taking that young man squarely between the eyes, and knocking him flat on his back in the street.

"You know I never was a fighter," continued Harry. "I go in for peace and quiet, straight out from the shoulder. But you fellows can't get along without a cooler, now and then."

As he spoke he caught his two remaining antagonists by the hair, one with each hand, and brought their heads together with a resounding crack that might have been heard a block away.

Then, bearing them backward, and tripping up their heels at the same time, he laid the pair of them on their backs in the street, beside Bill Blunt, who was slowly gathering himself together.

"If I was a fighting boy now, I might have hurt some of you," said Harry calmly. "But as long as I lay myself out for a peacemaker, you're not a-goin' to get me into any of your squabbles."

And he walked away with a look of pious gravity that set all the bystanders—of whom several had collected—laughing.

"Here's your coat, my peaceful boy, don't leave that," said one of them.

Harry picked up his coat and put it on, while his discomfited foes scrambled to their feet, and skulked sheepishly away.

With his hands in his pockets, and the dignity of a conqueror, Harry walked from the field of battle, his stately step starting a fresh burst of laughter in the bystanders.

"Appears as if I'm never goin' to get to Mr. Livingston; I've got so many mules to curry," he remarked to himself. "But what was the directions he gave me?"

He felt in the pocket in which he had put the paper given him by Mr. Livingston. But it was not there. Fancying that it had dropped out during the fight he turned back. After some search he found a scrap which might have been it, but it had been trampled in the mud until there was no writing distinguishable upon it.

"Well, if this ain't thundering unlucky, there's no use talking," he ejaculated. "It's all up, after all my trouble. And all my potater-parin' and pea-shellin', and pocket-pickin' is just flung away. Might as well have been playin' marbles all this time. A Jack I was that I didn't look at them directions afore I put 'em in my pocket. Mr. Livingston is dished out of his document, that's sure."

He walked disconsolately onward, making his way

at random toward the eastern side of the city. Crossing Broadway, he walked carelessly forward, not heeding or caring where he went.

"If I could only stumble across Mr. Livingston now, it would be as good as a treat," he said aloud.

"If you had stumbled across him an hour ago it might have been better," spoke a familiar voice near him.

Harry raised his eyes with a startled glance. There before him stood the very person of whom he had spoken.

CHAPTER VI.

A CHANGE OF BASE.

THERE was a very disconsolate look upon Edward Livingston's face as he slowly made his way along Beaver and up William street, too deeply sunk in thought to know or care just where he was going.

"This business is bad in two ways," he thought. "First that I have lost my labor, and Mr. Gordon has lost his property; and secondly that I have gained the reputation with these men of attempting to swindle them. It would be impossible now to make them see my real motives. I care not so much for that, however, as for the effect on Alice of this crushing blow. Poor girl, I fear that this will prove a sorry day's work for her. And all through my stupid forgetfulness. If ever any one wanted a cart-whipping it is that confounded boy."

At that very instant the "confounded boy," little less disconsolate than his employer, made the remark which we have quoted in the last chapter.

Livingston caught sight of him at the same instant, and answered as quoted.

"By the great jollification! if it ain't Mr. Livingston himself!" exclaimed Harry, in a tone of infinite relief. "Well, if this ain't just as good as a play. Couldn't have come straighter if I'd been shot out of a gun."

"And you couldn't have come more slowly if you had borrowed the feet of a snail," retorted Livingston, angrily. "You are a sweet specimen of an active messenger! And how came Mr. Stanway to get the paper, and send you back empty-handed?"

"Empty handed? Not much!" ejaculated Harry, his tongue in his cheek. "Tain't quite in that coon's boots to sell Handsome Harry as cheap as that. Fact is, sir, I got ambushed by three boys, who laid themselves out to lick me. Now I wasn't never no go on a fight, but I reckon somehow there ain't as much fight in them galoots as there was. Howsever that aren't the pint. I lost your directions in the scrimmage, and I was tacking along here, all at sea, when you and me come together, head on."

"But did you see Miss Gordon?" How came Stanway with the paper? And how is it that you are an hour behind time?"

"Le's get around this corner, out of the crowd, and I'll tell you all about it," answered Harry. "It's too long a story to be told in a breath."

It, in fact, took Harry some time to relate all he had seen and experienced, during his journey after the paper. One point only he suppressed, hardly knowing why—that of the theft of the diamond ring by Stanway.

Nor did he have much to say concerning his adventure in the kitchen, for fear that Mr. Livingston might think he had been wasting time there.

"Well, you are an admirable messenger after all Harry; and have done your best," said Livingston. "I am only sorry that you are too late, for the paper is of any use."

"No use!" cried Harry in dismay, as he drew the document from his breast pocket. "Why ain't it of no use? It's here, all O. K."

"Too late, my boy," returned Livingston, taking it and slowly unfolding it. "It is not your fault though. No one could have done more."

He held the open sheet before his eyes, and glanced at its contents.

"This is it, sure enough," he remarked. "But you have dropped a part of it," rejoined Harry.

In fact, as he opened the sheet, a folded paper had fallen out, and, caught by the wind, had fluttered to the ground ten paces away.

Harry hastened to recover it.

"What is that?" asked Livingston in some surprise.

"The agreement is all here," said Harry. "All I know is it fell out of that dokymant that's in your pants."

Livingston took it from the boy's grasp, and opened it. It was folded like a letter.

"Some instructions, perhaps, which Mr. Gordon may have added," he remarked, as he ran his eye quickly over the written paper.

Harry was looking him closely in the face as he did so, and was astonished by his sudden and extreme change of expression. A violent agitation succeeded his late calm; his face flushed; a quick light seemed to dart from his eyes.

"By heavens!" he exclaimed, in a tone that made passers-by pause and look at him curiously. "This is worth its weight in gold. Fifty times its weight in gold. Harry, my lad, I fancy you've unearthed the nearest rat's nest that was ever built in this great city. Hang the agreement now. We don't want any signatures. If all goes well the creditors can have their hundred per cent. instead of fifty."

Harry looked on astounded at this unusual display of emotion.

"I got it out of a rat-hole," he ventured, for lack of something better to say, "and that was Stanway's pocket."

"Exactly," exclaimed Livingston, his face radiant with delight. "You're the premium ferret, Harry. Rats have no chance before you."

He seized the boy's hand, and shook it with the utmost warmth.

"I'm glad I've toed the mark so square," said the pleased boy. "But now, Mr. Livingston, if you haven't no objections, I guess I'd best get back to business. It's a bootblack's duty to be at his post on a muddy morning."

"One moment, Harry," returned Mr. Livingston, again perusing the letter.

He stood for some minutes in deep thought.

"I wonder if Stanway suspects your having the papers?"

"I hugged him as close as if it had been a grizzly bear. He might 'spect."

"Then I must work with dispatch," exclaimed Livingston, excitedly. "Go back to where Stanway found you this morning. Here is his document, which you can return to him if he asks for it. But you are to know nothing of this letter."

"Don't talk about an oyster, or a 'Gyptian mummy-bell' dumb," returned Harry, with a knowing look. "If I ain't ten times dumber than the dumbest oyster that ever drunk salt water, then there's no use talkin'." Just let old Stanway try me on."

Harry brought the conversation to an end by walking away, as if he was in haste to give Stanway a specimen of the possibilities of dumbness.

"I may need you this afternoon," called out Livingston. "Keep in the neighborhood of the City Hall."

"Ay, ay!" came from Harry, who was already some distance away.

In half an hour more he had recovered his box from some hiding-place, and was back again, ready for business, at his morning's standpoint.

Livingston, left alone, again read the letter, and struck his knee with an outburst of pleasure.

"If this ain't the richest find!" he cogitated. "A regular nugget. But I've got to work like lightning to play a counterplot on the rascal. That boy is as sharp as a steel-trap; he may help me in my little game. But I must strike while the iron's hot. I fancy I will succeed in saving Mr. Gordon from the ditch in which they are seeking to plunge him."

Carefully depositing the letter in his pocket-book as he spoke, he hastened away, with a very different expression from that with which he had met Harry.

But, as we have no special business with Mr. Livingston at present, we will follow the young gentleman who has just left him.

"Shine 'em! Shine 'em! Here's your double action, nickel-plated polish!" called out Harry, in a cheery voice, as he swung his box over his shoulder.

"Here you are, sir," as a gentleman passed with a pair of soiled shoes on his feet. "Put your foot right here. S'pose your lady'd happen to see you with them shies? Why she'd out you clean out of her books. Hoist your boot-leather on to this box, and I'll make you a pair of black looking-glasses in the twink of a cat's eye."

With a laugh the gentleman obeyed, and was soon sent away with a brilliant polish.

"Who comes next?" called out Harry. "I'm open for jobs—Shine 'em! Shine 'em!—Here you are, sir. I'm the boy you was lookin' for. Just see how nice this box did your boot-sole. Will you have a *Herald* to read while I'm polishing 'em?"

"No, no," laughed the customer.

"I didn't bring my velvet arm-chair with me this mornin'. But maybe you can stand for two minutes. Just you take a squint at the clock up there, and I'll discount one cent on the job for every minute I run over two."

Harry felt that his reputation was at stake, and he worked away like a small wind-mill.

"There you are, sir, neat as a trivet. But I lost a minute scooping the mud off, and that oughtn't to count."

"You have made your time," said the customer, as he paid for the shine.

Harry walked on, whistling heartily, and keeping an eye open for trade.

"Business is brisk this afternoon. Tain't been a bad day nohow. Hallo, Bill Blunt, is that you? Stoppe that flood-gate in your nose, did you?"

"All right, Harry," said Bill. "You're my boss. I give in. But don't open out on this to the boys. Will you now?"

"I wasn't never a brag nor a blow, Bill; you know that. It's quits between us."

"Look out, Handsome Harry," cried little Tim, Harry's young admirer, as he ran up. "Keep your eye skinned. Here comes the chap you marked this mornin'!"

Harry looked up and saw Mr. Stanway approaching.

"I've run away from him three times to-day now," exclaimed Harry. "That breaks the charm. I ain't goin' to spend all my life runnin' away from any skulk like him."

As he spoke he was vigorously spitting into a box of blacking, into which he rubbed a brush till it was swimming with sable fluid.

"Ha! I thought I'd find you here!" exclaimed Stanway, angrily, as he came up.

"Stand back!" cried Harry, warningly. "I haven't got no sword nor no pistol. But I've got the boot-black's breech-loading rifle. If you don't want to catch it on the t'other knee, you'd best keep off."

Stanway backed in some dismay from before the dangerous brush, which Harry was brandishing in the air.

"You villainous young hound!" he fiercely roared. "Where is the paper you stole from my pocket this mornin'? If you do not deliver it up instantly I will have you in the Tombs before an hour."

"Stole it?—I wonder!" retorted Harry, still threatening with the brush. "Who dished me out of it first? Maybe you'll tell me that. But I don't care

for your old paper. I can't find Mr. Livingston, so you can have it back."

He took the folded document from his pocket, and handed it over, with a careless swing.

Stanway seized it with the avidity with which a vulture snatches a morsel of meat. A look of exultation was on his face. But it changed to dismay when he opened the paper and found that it did not contain the letter.

"Where is the other?" he cried. "There was a letter caught in its folds."

"Was there?" asked Harry, innocently. "It must be in my pocket then. And it's not there," he continued, after plunging his hand to the bottom of his pocket.

"You have it, you young thief. I will search you or have you searched."

"Keep off!" exclaimed Harry, with a warning sweep of the brush. "I never say what I don't mean. The boys here can search me, if they've a mind. But if you touch me, see if I don't make another entry in my day-book."

At this dread threat Mr. Stanway drew back.

"Go for him, boys," he said. "I'll give a dollar to the boy that finds my letter on him."

There was never a boy of Harry's size better searched than he was, on the strength of this magnificent offer. He stood perfectly still, while Bill Blunt, little Tim, and one or two others, went through his clothes, from head to foot.

But there was no letter to be found, and they finally gave it up in disgust. Mr. Stanway seemed to be thoroughly puzzled.

"Didn't I tell you so?" remarked Harry, still keeping the black end of his weapon toward his foe. "Maybe it was dropped in the Elevated when I pulled my dokymant out of your pocket. Better go for the conductor of that there train. Car 24, Sixth Avenue Elevated. That's what I'd do if I was in your boots. But I don't care a fig what you do. You can go to grass, if you want."

Mr. Stanway made another movement toward Harry, which the latter repelled by brandishing his dangerous weapon.

The baffled villain stood for a moment in suspense; then turned on his heel.

"The boy must be right," he muttered, as he walked away. "He evidently knows nothing about it. I must try the car."

"Good-by, old slider," called Harry, after him. "If you ain't the cheapest sold goose that was ever hung up in this market I wouldn't say so. I've cut out a good two hours' business for you, anyway; and that'll give Mr. Livingston so much more time to counter-march on you."

As he spoke he espied the gentleman whose name he had mentioned, rapidly approaching.

"Can you go with me, Harry?" he asked, as he came up.

"Yes; to Hong Kong, if you say the word."

"Then get rid of your box and follow me at once," and he walked quickly onward.

CHAPTER VII.

HARRY PLAYS A DOUBLE GAME, AND WINS.

AN hour after the date of the close of our last chapter Edward Livingston and Harry Hunter might have been seen traveling in very different directions. The first was going up-town in the direction of the Gordon's mansion; the second had crossed the North river at Courtlandt Street Ferry, and had taken a railroad train for Newark.

They are both on errands of some interest to us; but as we cannot follow them both at once, we will dispose first of Mr. Livingston's business, and then devote ourselves to the more interesting expedition of our young friend Harry.

The meeting between Alice Gordon and Edward Livingston was quiet, but there was in it an undefined element which rendered it very different from her previous meeting with Hall Stanway.

In fact, there is a quiet which is full of significance. Eyelids that droop on meeting, hands that tremble in clasping, show that there is a stir in the depths of the soul which does not appear on the surface, and that which seems pure calm to the looker-on may be a riot of the blood and a deep heart-throbbing to the actors.

But no word indicating thoughts of love dropped from their lips. Love could wait until the vital interests of this eventful day were settled. So beyond a tremor in their hands on meeting each other, and glances of furtive eloquence in their eyes, there was nothing to show that they were other than mere indifferent acquaintances.

A momentary silence and hesitation was broken by Alice, who asked, impetuously:

"I am so anxious to learn what has happened. Did the agreement reach you in time?—I fear it was largely my fault that you forgot it. Her eyes were again downcast in momentary confusion.

"I cannot excuse my negligence so easily as that—by making you responsible for it," he answered. "I felt like never forgiving myself."

"But why? Was it too late?"

"It was—so far as its main object was concerned."

"What?" she cried, growing slightly pale "did Stanway—was it purposely delayed?"

"I would not like to accuse any one of that," he replied. "There has been a series of misfortunes. The messenger I sent for it may have caused all the trouble by his over-zeal. He took the paper from Stanway; and then failed to find me."

"Now, that is too bad!" she exclaimed. "But where did you ever come across such a messenger? A handsome little fellow he was; but such a scape-grace! Why he almost created a revolution among the girls in the kitchen." She laughed heartily at the recollection of the scene.

"He is the King of the City Hall bootblacks. But

there is more in him than that. I intend to make further use of the boy, for I do not know where to find one smarter, or more wide-awake."

"But you said it was too late! Did the creditors refuse to sign? I fear that my poor father's recovery depends on these signatures."

"I hope not, Alice. They have not signed. But all is yet far from being lost."

"Why was it that this signature was so very necessary to-day?"

"I will tell you," he replied. "But to do so I must recapitulate the whole business. Of course you are well aware that your father's threatened failure is through no fault of his. Very few merchants, in these hard times, could bear a loss of one hundred thousand dollars, and be ready to meet their engagements. The loss of the ship Good-Speed and her cargo, without insurance, was a hard blow. But the robbery of those securities was fatal. If we could recover them—"

"But you cannot recover them," she interrupted. "Everything has been done. The thieves have hidden their tracks too completely."

"I am not so sure of that," he rejoined. "In fact, I fancy that I see a clew now to their trail. But to return to our subject. After your father's creditors had agreed to sign a paper accepting fifty per cent of their claims, we received notice that a suit for a large sum was about to be entered against him in the Rochester courts. The claim is a false one, and will never stand a close investigation. But the creditors would be sure not to sign a paper which binds them absolutely, as ours did, if they knew of this extra claim. They have heard of it, and there is now no hope of obtaining their signatures. If they bring suit it will be ruinous."

"But will they? You spoke just now of some hope remaining." Her voice had a very anxious ring. "It is not for myself I care, but for my poor father."

"There is hope—hope of regaining the stolen bonds—hope that the Good-Speed may not be a total loss. I have not told you all yet, Alice."

"But we will not trouble the reader just now with what further he had to say. It will all develop itself in time."

"I beg," he said, in conclusion, "that you will not change your demeanor toward Stanway. Nothing must be said or done to make him suspect."

"My demeanor is not so very inviting to him at any time," she replied, her innate disposition to merriment showing itself in a smile on her lips.

"He was here this morning, and—but there is something I have been forgetting," she hastily interrupted herself. "I, too, have been robbed, Edward. My jewel casket was carelessly left in the parlor this morning. It has been opened, and my solitaire ring stolen. But what makes you look so disturbed?"

"New troubles, Alice," he responded, with a sickly smile. "So there is a new addition to the tale of robberies."

"There has been no one there except Stanway and your messenger boy. Yourself, excepted, of course, and I hardly think it was you," she laughed, as if amused at the idea. "From what you have told me I fear that Stanway may have helped himself to my ring."

"It may be," he returned, in a low, somewhat doubting tone. "I scarcely think that the boy—"

"Oh, no! I don't dream of such a thing. He is too frank, honest, and direct. He is no thief."

"I am glad that you do not think it was he," was the rejoinder. "I should be sorry indeed—after sending him here."

"But we must dispense with the remainder of this conversation, to follow the boy—of whose freedom from theft Livingston was evidently not quite sure—in his new journey."

"A high old time I'm having of it to-day," he cogitated, as the rattling train bore him through the hills that environ Jersey City, and out into the wide marshes beyond, watered by the snake-like bends of their sluggish river.

"Never done so much railroading in one day in my life before. And it's goin' to pay like wild. Money's just been a-shovelin' into my pockets. A month's shining up wouldn't hold a candle to it."

Leaving the train at Market street station, he walked up that busy avenue, looking eagerly to the right and left.

"I'm pretty much at sea here," he muttered, "for I don't know any more about this here city than a cat knows about hunting possums, but I've got a tongue in my head, and I never knowed the time that I was afeared to use it. I can ask my way to Simmon's street."

Yet he did not find it so easy to discover this street by asking. It was a small, obscure street, and most of those he asked had never heard of it, while those who had did not know just how to locate it.

But by dint of continued questioning, varied by an application to a city directory, he was finally enabled to find the street. It was a narrow, dirty passage-way, running but one or two blocks, in the most uninviting portion of the city.

It was nearly four o'clock in the afternoon when Harry reached this new locality. The day continued bright and warm, the treasure of the sunshine falling here as richly as in the most aristocratic quarters.

The boy looked keenly around, as he passed slowly through the street.

"No. 27," he muttered to himself. "Here is 23. Ah! yonder it is; that brown stone palace, built of brick, with a brown stone door-step, and the whole business as tumble-down as if it had gone through an earthquake. Now if I can only twig my man—brown side-whiskers, long nose, five feet six, squint in his left eye. If I'd see such a chap in the dark I'd know him. But it won't do to seem as if I'm on the spotting game."

Harry looked eagerly around him, in search of some excuse to justify his continued presence in that street. It would not suit his purpose to run the risk of being taken for a spy.

Some three doors down the street a group of boys was collected, busily engaged in a game of marbles. Here was just the opportunity Harry wanted. He prided himself on his skill at marbles.

For awhile he stood looking on, with one eye on the game and the other on the house over which he was keeping guard.

"That's not fair," cried Harry at length, to the winning boy. "He told you to knuckle down, and that wasn't nary a knuckle."

"What do you know about it?" asked the boy angrily, gathering up his winnings.

"I know enough to clean you out of all the marbles you've swindled these little chaps out of."

"It ain't in your boots," retorted the other defiantly.

"All right. Make your ring," returned Harry. "We'll see who's brag and who's boss."

In a minute more they were deep in the intricacies of the ancient and honorable game of marbles, with all its mysteries of "knuckle-down," "Fen-puds," and other strange passwords, borrowed from some of the dead languages.

But the Newark boy soon found that he was a tyro at the game. In Harry he recognized a master of the art; and the hoarded marbles flowed in a steady stream from his pocket to that of this skillful stranger.

The younger boys looked on with exclamations of delight, as they saw that their victorious foe had met more than his match, in this wonderful stranger.

"Peg it into him!" cried one of them eagerly. "He's been a-scorching us, and a-bragging over us. It's about time somebody was a-taking the starch out of him."

"Get out of the way, you little devils!" called out a harsh voice, as a broad-shouldered man pushed his way through them.

Harry was on his knees, taking a difficult shot, but he stopped long enough to look up at the man. Side-whiskers—long nose—the squint not visible—but Harry missed his shot. His eyes followed the man, who walked boldly to the door of No. 27, and entered without ringing.

From that time forward the fortunes of the game varied. Harry's shots were not nearly so marvelous as before, and his antagonist began to get back some of his lost marbles.

"I believe my hand's getting out of order," remarked Harry.

He did not deem it necessary to explain that marbles were now occupying only one half of his thoughts, and that victory never comes from half-hearted work.

He continued to play, however, his small admirers lapsing into silence as fortune turned against their champion, and the flow of marbles began to ebb back into the pockets of his antagonist.

A half-hour more passed in this hotly-contested game, at the end of which time Harry rose to his feet with a yawn.

"There, I'm tired-out playing," he said. "You chaps can finish the game." And he distributed the remainder of his winnings among his gladdened partisans. "Play like I did and you'll warp him yet."

Harry walked quietly away, leaving a buzz of excitement at his unexpected generosity behind him.

There was more reason for this sudden movement than the boys dreamed of. The long-nosed man had just emerged again from the door of No. 27, and turned with a rapid step down the street, in the opposite direction to that in which he had come before.

He held in his hand a large leather pocket-book, which he carefully placed in some interior pocket, as he hastened onward through the street.

Harry followed, with a lounging step, and a careless manner, gradually letting the man get about half a block in advance of him.

This interval was kept up, as pursuer and pursued passed through street after street, constantly tending toward the Market street depot.

As they drew near this place Harry hastened his footsteps. The man entered the waiting-room, which was already well occupied, and which our young traller walked into a minute afterward. The man was examining the time-table, his foot tapping the floor with an impatient sound.

Harry coiled himself up on one of the seats, and looked at anything except the man who was most of all in his mind.

There was no great occasion for impatience. A train came along within fifteen minutes. Harry followed his unsuspecting quarry into the cars, taking a seat just behind him.

He noticed that, ere they had gone far, the man took the leather book from his pocket, and opened it with a slightly nervous movement.

He seemed anxious to see if its contents were all right. Harry's keen eye shot through the narrow opening, and caught a glimpse of some shining, parchment-like papers, ere it was closed and returned to the pocket of its holder.

The pursuit continued to the ferry-boat, and to the streets of New York, which they reached about half-past five o'clock.

The man walked up Courtlandt street to Broadway, and for some distance along this busy avenue. He turned off at the post-office, and made his way out toward the Bowery.

Harry was now on his own stamping ground, and readily followed his man without any danger of discovery in the crowds which were on the street at that hour of the afternoon.

Going some distance up the Bowery, he at length turned off at a narrow side-street. He had not

gone far down this; when he paused and turned into a low-browed ale-house, which occupied the corner of two streets.

"Holed!" cried Harry to himself, in exultation. "And now I'd give a dime to see Mr. Livingston."

CHAPTER VIII.

ANYTHING FOR HOGAN.

HARRY was not one to wait long for things to turn up. He was more inclined to turn things up for himself. The windows of the establishment within which his man was lost to view were partly screened by green blinds, but there was an open space of an inch in width at the bottom, through which the keen-eyed boy managed to get a glimpse of the inside.

The man stood at the bar, talking with the bar-keeper. After a moment Harry saw the latter pass out a folded note, which his ill-favored customer hastily opened, and read its contents.

The boy was not very favorably situated for close observation, yet he distinctly saw that the reader changed countenance, and seemed to be annoyed.

Crushing the note in his hand, he entered again into conversation with the man behind the bar, and for a few minutes they continued in earnest talk. He then walked back by a side door behind the bar, leading to the interior of the house.

Harry did not know just what to think of these movements. He backed off and looked up at the front of the house, with something of the same hope of getting at its contents which a reader has when he examines the title page of a book.

"If I seen a man with a face like that house I'd think he wanted watchin'," soliloquized Harry. "It's got a reg'lar hang-dog look. I bet there's more passes over that bar than ale, or half-and-half. Let's take a squint round the corner, and see what kind of face it makes at the other street."

His squint round the corner told him more than he had calculated upon. It showed him that he had been on the point of losing the game which he had so well played up to this point. For there, not twenty yards from the corner, was the familiar brown coat and embrowned neck of the man he had been pursuing.

The latter had, apparently, left the house from the rear, and was hurrying away from the locality at a rapid pace. Harry's quick eye caught in his hand the glint of white paper, as if he still held there the note which he had crushed in his grasp.

"By Jeminy, if I wasn't as near as a hair bein' throwed," ejaculated the boy, as he hastened onward down the narrow street. "That chap's just as keen as a cucumber; but Harry Hunter ain't to be flung as easy as you'd throw off a chestnut-bur."

The man looked cautiously around several times, in seeming dread of being watched, but his pursuer walked on with a steady, bold step, as if home and a warm supper were foremost things in his thoughts.

In this way the distance between them quickly diminished. It decreased still more rapidly when Harry, at length, broke into a run. The man just then halted, and gave a cautious glance backward, partly turning to the left. In his relaxed right hand the crushed note was plainly visible.

As he paused, Harry, who was quite near, ran against him with almost force enough to dash him to the ground. This collision was principally against his right side and arm, and gave him a staggering inclination to the left, from which he with difficulty recovered.

Harry fared still worse, for he tumbled headlong on the edge of the sidewalk, only saving himself from injury by his flung-out hands.

A fierce oath broke from the man's lips.

"You blundering young heathen!" he exclaimed, "I'd serve you right for your awkwardness by kicking you into the gutter."

Yes; you're a high old aristocratic 'coon, you are!" grumbled Harry, as he slowly scrambled to his feet. "Nobody with a grain of common sense would stop in the middle of the pavement, so that everybody in a hurry must come butting up ag'in' him. Guess you've been brung up in the country, and fed on buttermilk."

The man seemed still dubious as to whether or not he owed the boy a kick, as the latter limped away, grumbling to himself as he went. In a minute more Harry disappeared around the next corner.

The man, after a moment's hesitation, hastened on, saying to himself:

"I'll be shot if I didn't think it was a battering ram, taking me in the back. That boy must be as solid as cast-iron. I'd like to pay him out with a foot-lifter yet. But, by the great guns, what's become of my letter?"

His right hand, in which he had held the crushed note, was empty.

Starting hastily back, he examined the spot where the collision had taken place, as nearly as he could remember, the exact locality. But no trace of the lost note was visible.

"That blasted boy must have knocked it out of my hand, I suppose," he muttered. "And it's likely the wind finished the job. Let it go. Nobody could make out what it means, that's some comfort. I must slide on."

When Harry, a minute or two afterward, looked around the corner behind which he had hidden, the man was gone. He had turned back, or taken some other course. Search as he would the boy could not again get sight of him.

"I thought he was comin' straight on," considered Harry, as if in apology to himself. "If he ain't flung me right out and out—and I thought I was sharp! Anyhow I've got this," and he looked at a piece of white paper in his hand. "I didn't go to plowin' up the curbstone for nothin', anyhow."

The boy occupied himself in flattening out the crumpled piece of paper, as he walked quickly

onward. It opened, at length, into the shape of a half-sheet of note paper, partly occupied by writing. "It was near here I was to meet Mr. Livingston," he said, after a ten minutes' walk. "Ah! there's the spot, just ahead. And there he is himself!"

"What luck, Harry?" asked Mr. Livingston, starting forward from the spot where he had been impatiently waiting. "I could not find the place mentioned in the letter, and have been waiting here for the last hour."

"Good and bad luck, the bad mixed through the good like raisins in a puddin'," answered Harry with a shrug. "But I'll tell you all about it, Mr. Livingston."

It took Harry some ten or fifteen minutes to get through the story of his adventures. He ended by saying:

"I lost him; but I got his letter. I knocked it out of his hand, and grabbed it when I was down buttin' my head ag'in the pavin' stones. Here it is; and I hope there's somethin' in it."

Livingston read the note handed him, with a curious expression.

"There may be something in it," he remarked, "but I don't just make it out."

"Spin it out so I can hear it," returned Harry. "Two heads is better than one, you know."

Livingston read as follows:

"You must be wary. There's danger afloat. Strike for new quarters, and leave word with Tim. 'Anything for Hogan,' will be the password. I will be on your track when sure my own is clear."

"That is a decidedly mysterious document," said Livingston. "What does it all mean?"

"I s'pose it means that Mr. Long-nose is to leave word at the ale-house where he's strikin' for. And 'anything for Hogan' is the password that's to unlock that honest bartender's tongue."

Livingston remained a moment lost in thought. "I imagine you are right," he then replied. "We will try it on him at all events. It may prove the 'open sesame' to let us in to their secrets."

In a short time they were in front of the ale-house, the scene of Harry's late adventure. He looked again through the open slit at the window bottom.

"The coast's clear," he announced. "Now's your time. But that's a cunning-looking chap. You've got to be wide-awake."

Without replying, Mr. Livingston entered the open door of the tap-room, and passed around the screen which stood just within it.

The rough-faced man behind the bar stirred himself at the prospect of a customer.

"Good-evening," was Livingston's address.

"Good-ev'nin' yourself," returned the man, in a strong old-cunin' accent, as he bustled to place glasses on the bar.

"A noggin of ale," ordered the customer.

"That's the brew for a mon of taste," responded the bar-keeper, seizing a deep goblet.

"Draw one for yourself then," answered Livingston. "We'll drink together to the health of good old nut-brown ale."

The bar-tender's rough face showed marks of content, as he hastened to draw and place on the bar two foaming goblets, with the froth streaming down their earthen sides.

"There's a tippie for a king," he said.

"Can't say that I'm so particular," returned Livingston, as he lifted the brown mug, and looked at its foaming froth-cap. "Some folks are hard to please; but for me, my motto is—'Anything for Hogan.'"

This was spoken in an indifferent tone, but there was a keen intelligence in the look which he gave the bar-tender.

The latter slightly started, and glanced cautiously toward a man who sat at a table on the other side of the room, quietly sipping his ale.

"That's well put, where the brew's a slack 'un," rejoined the bar-tender. "Some sich tap as Bill Lathrop's, or Jake Blembery's, or say Joe Tod's, at Prince and Apple streets. But it dunnot apply to my ale."

There was a peculiar expression of the bar-keeper's countenance accompanying the name of Joe Tod, which told Livingston that it was intended as an answer to his signal.

But it was not his cue to take seeming notice of it. He quietly sipped his ale, with an air of great satisfaction.

"But how? It might be objected to."

"Leave that to me. I've got a key that will unlock every door in that shanty; and a pass-word that will take me into every room."

"I do not understand what you mean," returned the doubting Livingston.

"It's the bootblack's latch-key," rejoined Harry, "the box and brush. And the pass-word is the bootblack's cry. Shine 'em! Shine 'em! I wouldn't be afeared to try Queen Victoria's palace with that—Here, Jem, lend me your box for five seconds."

This was addressed to an acquaintance in the same line of business with Harry, who was just then passing.

He readily made the loan requested, and Harry went singing into the tap-room, giving vent to his cry of "Shine 'em! Shine 'em!" as soon as he was fairly within.

"Not to-day, Harry," said the landlord, a rubicund-visaged personage, who seemed the embodiment of good humor and good living.

"Maybe some of your friends here?" continued Harry looking around the room. "Ain't there nobody wants an over-shot, double-barreled polish? Don't speak all at once."

Nobody took the trouble to speak at all, and Harry shouldered his box again, exclaiming:

"I never seed so many salted sardines afore, packed in one box. And there ain't a pair of shoes among you that's smelt blackin' for a good six months.—All right, if you ain't got no respect for yourselves, I'm a-goin' through the house, Joe Tod. Maybe I'll find somebody there that's been brought up in respectable society."

"Very well," said the smiling landlord, "try your luck."

Harry went whistling back into the house. He had noted every face in the bar-room. There was no trace of his man among them. Instead now of going into the rear rooms, for a chat with the girls, as Joe had expected, Harry made his way up-stairs.

He thought it possible that the man he sought might have taken one of the upper rooms.

"Shine 'em! Shine 'em!" cried Harry, as he opened door after door.

The rooms were empty; and he went on from one to another, still with the ringing war-cry.

He finally reached a door at the extremity of the passage, where it opened upon a view of the street.

This door he flung open with the same reckless boldness as before.

At last he had struck oil. There, standing on a chair, at a high closet in a corner of the room, was the familiar form of the long-nosed man. He was reaching up to the highest shelf of the closet, but dropped his arm, and turned suddenly on hearing the door open.

"Who in the blazes is there?" he ejaculated with a fierce oath.

"Shine 'em! Shine 'em!" sung out Harry. "Give you a ripstaving polish. Get down and give me a fair chance at them there dirty boots, and see if I don't make them shine like silver."

"You thundering catamaran of an impudent young hound, if you don't take your ugly face from here before a frog could croak his prayers, blast me if I—"

He had sprung to the floor as he spoke. Harry jerked the door quickly to, cutting off this long-threat in the middle.

He ran like a deer down the passage; and none too soon, for a boot-jack came flying after him ere he reached the head of the stairs.

"What luck?" asked Mr. Livingston, as Harry emerged whistling into the street, a minute afterward.

"Just the best. I've a notion our rat's holed. Here's your box, Jem. Git, now, you young rascal, and don't be losing jobs."

CHAPTER IX.

MR. GORDON TAKES A HAND IN THE GAME.

HARRY had every right to sleep soundly that night, for his day's work had been a busy one, and had led him far away from his legitimate business of polishing the understandings of the good citizens of the metropolis.

And there promised as busy labors for him during the coming day; not only from the part of his work left unfinished, but from new complications which were gathering around his devoted young head.

But we must seek again the mansion of the Gordons on the morning of the next day.

And we shall now be obliged to make the acquaintance of Mr. Gordon, the ruined merchant, whom his business troubles had so prostrated.

He was much better this morning. He had slept well during the night, and his nervous prostration seemed greatly relieved. He was seated in a deep easy-chair, enjoying the sunlight that flowed in at the open window, his flowered dressing-gown glowing like a June parterre in the morning glow.

He was a handsome, full-faced man, with something arbitrary about his mouth, though kindness encircled his wide blue eyes.

"What keeps Alice?" he muttered to himself, impatiently, as his glance sought the door. "She should have been here ten minutes ago."

He looked at his handsome gold watch, as if to satisfy himself of the extent of her delay. At the same instant the door opened and Alice entered.

But before doing so she thrust into her pocket an open letter which she had held in her hand. There was a pale, agitated look upon her features, and a suspicion of tears about her eyes, evidence of a mental trouble which was with difficulty suppressed.

"Why, what ails the girl?" he asked, with a look of concern. "Here she is half as pale as a ghost, and—"

"Oh, it is nothing, papa," she exclaimed, tenderly kissing him. "I am glad indeed to see you so well this morning. And I do hope you are going to be your own old self again."

"Me! Why of course I am, child!" he returned, with the testiness of an invalid. "But what has happened to my Alice? It is no trouble with the girls, I hope. I will send them all packing if they worry you. Or is it that ring?—James told me that your ring was stolen."

"Yes, papa," she quickly responded, apparently glad of some excuse to stop his inconvenient questioning. "It is too bad! However, I presume that I can do very well without it."

"But, girl, lost for once is not lost forever," said the positive invalid. "There have been things found before, and that may be too."

"Yes, yes, papa; it may come back to me, I know," she hurriedly rejoined, as if not satisfied with the turn the conversation was taking. "Never mind the ring—we can talk about that again. At present—"

"Let's settle the ring question before we go drifting off into the land of nowhere," he positively protested. "There is no keeping you women long enough to one point to get it definitely out of the way. You have such a bad habit of drifting off. Now if we merchants did business in that way—"

and he shook his head in indication of what disastrous consequences might come from doing business in that loose way.

If it had been any one else Alice might have been tempted to say that his own way of doing business had not been a great success; but she kept silent.

"It was careless in you to leave your jewel casket in the reception-room," he continued. "I learn from James that there were but three persons in the room while the casket was there. Those were Livingston, Stanway, and an impudent beggar of a boy. Who was he, Alice?"

"He was a messenger sent me by Mr. Livingston, after something which he had forgotten."

"But who? What was his name?"

"He called himself Harry Hunter. He was a bootblack, whom Mr. Livingston engaged at the City Hall."

"Isn't it plain enough then, child?" asked the father, in vexation at her lack of shrewdness. "Stanway and Livingston! The idea of theft is preposterous as connected with them—that boy has your ring. Nothing can be more evident than that."

"No, no," she hurriedly responded, her pallor deepening. "The boy is honest. You have only to look in his face to see that he is honest. I hope you will not trouble yourself about the ring. Let it go. Do not worry yourself, dear papa."

"All very nice," was his querulous response. "Of course, we are all honest, I, and James, and the girls, and everybody. All the world is honest, and that remarkable ring walked off on its own legs."

"Now, papa, dear, you will vex me ever so much if you keep thinking about that old ring. Do let us talk of something else." She seated herself in his lap, and threw her arms lovingly around his neck.

"Let us talk about the sunshine. No diamond was ever half so beautiful as that."

Mr. Gordon answered with a mollified growl, as if not half content to be coaxed out of a sweet morsel.

"You are the most outrageous little cox, and I am the most ridiculous old minny," he grumbled, as he kissed her sweet lips. "But what chance has a man to keep business in his head, when he is persecuted by such fairies as you?"

But Alice had gained her point, and carried the conversation away from a subject which, for some reason, she wished to avoid. In a half hour afterward she left her father, apparently in self-satisfied content.

But the pallor and agitation returned to her face, as soon as the door had fairly closed behind her. She took the letter again from her pocket, reading it with eyes that glistened as if with a dew of tears.

"Oh, my God!" she exclaimed. "Can it be? Can it be? The shock is enough to set my brain wild! That he—that Edward! I can scarce believe it; even on his own word."

Reaching the parlor she fell in a nerveless attitude upon a sofa, her eyes again perusing that letter which was apparently the cause of her overwhelming distress. She crushed the epistle in her hands, and pressed them on her moistened eyes, as if she wished to shut out every vision of a hateful world.

Meanwhile Mr. Gordon had returned to the subject from which she had sought to divert his attention.

"Alice is entirely too simple-minded," he said. "She is old enough to know more of the world; but one can not well gain wisdom without experience. That boy stole the ring. Of that, there is no doubt. He must be arrested and committed for the theft."

He rung the bell for James, and sent him off into the city to enter a charge of theft against Harry Hunter, at the police court, and procure a warrant for his arrest. When taken he was to be thoroughly searched. If the ring was not found upon him, or at his residence, then Miss Gordon and the servants were to be notified to testify against him. Mr. Gordon was sure that a commitment would force him to disgorge the stolen property.

Hardly was this order given, and James sent out for its accomplishment, when Mr. Gordon received a visit from Mr. Livingston, who expressed himself as heartily gratified to observe his improved condition.

"I wish to report progress," remarked the visitor, after some words of greeting had passed. "I have news for you, both good and bad, if you feel in condition to receive them."

"Certainly, Ned," replied Mr. Gordon, with whom Livingston was a favorite. "The good can serve as an antidote for the bad."

"Hardly," rejoined Livingston, "for the bad is a fixed fact, and the good only a prospect. However, you would probably prefer to judge for yourself."

He proceeded to relate the events of yesterday, except that he avoided the introduction of Stanway's name, or any clear account of the pursuit of the lost papers. It was not advisable to have too many confidants before their business was accomplished.

As a part of this revelation he read to Mr. Gordon the letter which had been taken from Stanway's pocket, though he avoided telling him from what source he had obtained it.

It ran as follows:

"27 Simmons St., Newark.

"DEER SUR:

"I got yourn all rite, but its plade out, and I ain't a-gone to kepe them plaguey dokkyments no longer nohow. Thar ain't nothin' in them fur me sept what I got now, and I'm bound to unlode. There's bene some coons smellin' round this strete aready, and if old Gordon's got wind of our trac it mote be a ten yearer fur me in a ston jug. An' thet won't go down. I'm a comin' over to Tim Coin's Old Bally afore six to nite with ther dokkyments, an' I s'pect you to mete me thar and saddle them yourself if you ain't a b'illin' over fur trubbel. Cos I'm not goin' to sing in a ston cage to sute nobody.

"Your Spectful Sarvent,

"JACK BRUNTER."

It was this precious epistle which had put Livingston on the track of the stolen bonds; though it was pure Greek to Mr. Gordon until his visitor had explained his conception of it, and what measures he had taken. As we have said he took care not to explain these very definitely, lest Mr. Gordon, in spite of his promised caution, might prove too communicative. It is possible, indeed, that he would not have said anything of the matter, had he known that Stanway was even then in the house.

The latter person was, in fact, calling upon the daughter, while his rival was closeted with the father.

It was with a forced self-control that Alice received him. She had promised to be cautious in her demeanor toward him; though, for reasons which had come to her since, she distrusted Livingston's accusation of his rival.

"The whole matter really lies in a word," said Stanway, after their conversation had proceeded for some time. "I am devoted to you and to your father, and will do all I can for you. But I cannot say that my devotion to you is the quiet one of friendship. What I said yesterday I will not unsay to-day."

"Nor I," she answered briefly and coldly.

"I am sorry, then, if I am reopening a subject distasteful to you. Believe me that I would not do so without an object. I have something to offer you in return for the gift of your love, Alice."

"What?" she chillingly asked.

"Your father's safety. I have learned much since I left you yesterday. I will not say that I can save his fortune. But if you will but give me a promise, a hope, of this dear hand in case of success, I will work as no hero ever worked, and be content to lose it in case of failure."

"Is it on the principle that they who hide can find, Mr. Stanway?" she asked, with a stern accusing intonation that made him start despite himself.

"What do you mean, Miss Gordon?"

His tone was pained and wondering.

"Only that performances are sometimes as cheap as promises," she haughtily answered. "And this more I will say—the man who truly loves acts first and appeals afterward. I decline to sell myself to Hall Stanway; or to any man."

She was sweeping with an air of grand hauteur from the room, when his next words arrested her steps.

"Some one has been believin' me!" he exclaimed. "Was it Ned Livingston, that false-hearted meddler, who has already—"

She half turned, with an indescribable look upon her face.

"Edward Livingston is no more to me than are you," she interrupted, a deep tremor in her voice. "Hardly as much. You have no more occasion to fear him as a rival than he has to fear you."

She turned again to the door, but paused with an involuntary start.

For there stood Livingston, his face full of pained astonishment, his hand grasping the door frame with a clutch as if to hinder him from falling. A rifle shot could not have shocked him more deeply than had those few disdainful words.

"Alice!" came in tremulous accents from his white lips. He could say no more, but his eyes spoke volumes.

What had come upon her? She bent upon him a look like that basilisk glance of old, that turned men into stone. There was deep pain in those eyes; but there was unquenchable scorn—not anger, it had nothing in it of the transient gleam of anger.

Livingston loosed his hold of the door, and staggered like a drunken man, when she had passed him and disappeared.

"Great Heaven!" came in low tones from his lips, "Is she or am I mad?"

A cynical curl marked Stanway's lips as he looked upon this scene.

"Perhaps she is coming to her senses," he said, as he also passed from the room.

There was a sneer in his voice that almost tempted Livingston to strike him. The astounded lover looked after his insulting rival for a moment, while a new light broke upon his mind.

"It is you then!" he cried. "You that I have to thank for this sudden change! You that have poi-

soned her mind with some deep falsehood against me! Beware, Hall Stanway! my turn will come. No lie can live in the presence of truth."

The sneering villain failed to hear these words. He passed on into the house; while Livingston, staggering like one who has received a heavy blow, walked slowly down the stairs and from the house.

Had he dreamed of the lack of discretion in Mr. Gordon he would not have left so soon. Stanway was with him less than a half-hour, yet in that time the invalid had let out, bit by bit, every word of the revelation which Livingston had made him.

The latter had done wrong in not warning him specially against Stanway, in whom Mr. Gordon had every confidence. He had done wrong, in fact, in making him his confidant at all, if his revelation was to be partial. The only evidence of wisdom he had shown was that of concealing the details of his discovery; so that, when Stanway soon afterward left the house, he was stunned and frightened at what he had heard, but did not know just what course to take to baffle his unseen pursuers.

CHAPTER X.

HARRY IN AMBUSH.

"THIS is just the weight of my 'pinion," remarked Harry Hunter, in the tone of an oracle, to Mr. Livingston, who had lately joined him. "If we ain't sharp as pins and needles them coons will play some carom on us yet. Now I think you'd best keep a wide-awake eye on Tim Coin's ale-house, and see if anything turns up. And I'll go to Joe Tod's, and ruminate that room till there won't be a shadder left in it."

Harry was decidedly taking the business into his own hands. He had more reasons than one for this. One was a thorough confidence in his own ability, and in the sure working of a plan which lay dormant in his brain. The other was that Mr. Livingston seemed strangely preoccupied and gloomy, and quite unfit for such delicate business as they had now on hand.

"It's likely old Stanway will be scouting round here; or it might be Mr. Long-nose. You foller 'em if they do. You must 'scuse me, Mr. Livingston, but you don't seem to have enough bizness in you today to sell taters by the small."

"You had better accept excuses from me, Harry," said Livingston, with a sickly smile. "I am not myself to-day. But I think I can do what you wish, and will give you the chance to try your luck with Joe Tod."

"You see, Joe knows me like a breeze," returned Harry. "I've got my box this mornin', and this is Joe's blackin' day. While I'm polishin' his shoe-leather, see if I don't tie some sort of a bow-knot in his brain-pan. I'm a-goin' through that house, or I'm gone to make Rome howl; you may bet your empty pocket-book on that. Here goes for 'em."

And throwing his box over his shoulder, Harry strode off, whistling Little Buttercup's song in Finafore till the very street resounded again.

"I wonder if Long-nose has been back for his dokkyments," Harry asked himself, as he halted in front of Joe Tod's, and gave it a scrutinizing glance. "The best way to find out, I s'pose, is to go in and see. So here goes."

It was to the tune of the Admiral's song that our young friend marched into Joe Tod's hostelry. One would have thought, by the way he rattled it off, that he had himself been brought up to "polish up the handle of the big front door," instead of to polish up the uppers of his countrymen's boots and shoes.

"Here you are, Joe Tod," cried the boy, as he flung his box on the floor. "Rattle out your boots, for I'm a-goin' to shine you up till your grandmother won't know you. See if she don't swear it's the Duke of Durham, or some other big nobby that's tryin' to play it off on her? And you won't go along the streets without all the young ladies wantin' you to stop, so they can see their pretty faces in them looking-glasses on your feet."

"Dry up there, now," returned the landlord, laughing. "You've got more blow in you than a ten-knot breeze. Shine away, but put a clapper on that talk-box of yours."

"Do you want me to bust?" asked Harry, indignantly, as he worked away with both hands. "You might as well set fire to gunpowder, and then try to bottle it up, as 's'pect me to stop talkin', when I'm full of it."

"I don't know any one that wants corking up worse," responded Joe. "You're like a mill-race that's just broke its banks."

"Look at them boots now, and then say that I ain't a rip-stavin' shiner!" exclaimed Harry, as he rose to his feet, and looked down with pride upon his work.

"Yes; pretty good for a greenhorn," said Joe, indifferently.

"Much a greenhorn," cried Harry, indignantly. "Just you find a chap of my size in all New York, that can flint his elbows, and bling blackin' up to my level, and I'll sell out, box and brush. Say, Joe, got a full house now?"

"What in the thunder is it your business?"

"Cause I want to take a room for a-day or two, that's all."

"Take a—what?"

"Now, don't stand on your ear 'cause I asked you a question. If you ain't got no rooms to spare, just say so, and I'll try at the Astor."

"You want a room, hey?"

"Fact is, Joe Tod, I had a little difference of 'pinion up home last night, and dad got the best of the argyment."

"How was that?"

"Why, he kicked me out of doors for an imper-

cumvent, so I just toddled. Now I've got to take quarters for a day or two till he comes round again."

"Well, if you ain't a sweet young honey," rejoined the landlord, looking admiringly on the cool-speaking lad. "Hang me if I don't feel like taking you in for your grit."

"I calculate to pay my way like a man," rejoined Harry, proudly. "I haven't got no extra lining of dingbats just now, but I'll put up my box and brush for security. And there ain't no gentleman of my bizness in York that'll go back on that security."

"Blast it, Harry, I'll take you in for a day or two, if I never see your cash. I don't like to see true grit go beggin' or starvin'."

"You're a hoss, Joe. What room are you a-goin' to give me? You see I want to take a wash-up now."

"Well, toddle up-stairs then. Here's No. 6 and 8 empty. Take your choice."

"And No. 4?"

"That's full. It was taken yesterday."

"All right. I'll take No. 6. Trot out your key, for I want to interduce my face to some fresh water, and my hair to a comb. Slept in a coal-bin last night, and combed my head this mornin' with a fire-shovel."

Joe laughed heartily as his irrepressible young friend made his way up-stairs.

"That boy's got the making of a man in him," said the landlord to himself. "Bless his bright eyes, I'd give him six weeks' board before I'd see him adrift on the streets."

Harry, meanwhile, was occupied with other thoughts.

"He still holds on to No. 4, that's one comfort," the boy soliloquized. "Wonder if he's in now?"

He listened intently at the door of the room in question. No sound came through it. He next cautiously knocked at the door. There was no answer.

"Looks as if the coast was clear," he cogitated. "If I can only get in now."

He soon discovered, however, that the door was locked; and, next, that the key of No. 6 would not open it.

"I don't see what I'm to do, 'cept it's to lay in ambush, and wait for something to turn up," considered the boy, as he opened and entered the adjoining room, of which he had the key.

"Let me see: Here's a winder lookin' out on the yard. And, by Jeminy! it ain't more than six feet from Mr. Long-nose's winder. And there's a ledge of bricks just under the winders that a monkey or a cat could go along. I can't say that I'm as spry as a monkey or a cat, but there ain't no tellin' what a boy can do till he's tried. It isn't so dreadful deep if I tumble."

The ledge in question was only some three inches in width, with no purchase for the hands save an occasional crevice where the mortar had worked out from between the bricks. But Harry was bold, alert and reckless. He never considered an object long enough to grow timid at a dangerous prospect. Before two minutes he had his feet on the ledge, and was slowly working his way along, holding on to the edge of his window as he did so.

But he had to loose his hold of this ere the other window was within reach, there being a space of some two or three feet, which it seemed almost impossible to pass.

Harry carefully scrutinized the brick wall. Just over his head was one of the narrow crevices mentioned. Into this he dug the ends of his slender fingers, and found that he was able to sustain himself while he shuffled his feet a short distance further onward.

Other crevices appeared beyond, and the boy soon, much to his relief, found himself within reach of the frame of the next window.

The perilous passage had hardly occupied two minutes, yet it seemed to him as if a quarter of an hour had elapsed.

Getting a firm hold of the sash, he tried to lift it. It was, fortunately, not fastened, and in a minute more he found himself within that mysterious No. 4, which contained the object of all his present hopes.

He looked heedfully around. It was furnished precisely like the room he had left, with a low bed, a plain bureau and washstand, a looking-glass and two chairs.

"S'pose there's no use foolin'," remarked Harry. "I'm a-goin' through this room, and if them papers are here they're my divvy. First place is the top shelf of the closet, where I saw Long-nose a-rum-magin'."

Harry's success was not very promising in this direction. The closet was high, and even when standing on the chair he had difficulty in getting his hand into its recesses.

He was about to turn the chair, so as to be able to mount upon its back, and thus make the effort at better advantage, when a sound without the room made him pause.

It was a step, which came along the passage, and stopped when opposite the door of No. 4. Quick as lightning Harry replaced the chair, and plunged under the bedstead, which was just high enough to admit him.

The door was unlocked, and a person entered.

"What confounded noise was that I heard?" came to Harry's ears, in a tone of distrust. "Everything is quiet enough now. It must have been a rat."

He bustled around for a minute or two, pulling down the window curtain, and moving the chairs.

"Tim Coin's let the cat out of the bag, that's sure," he remarked. "The fellow he says he put on the Joe Tod scent wasn't Mr. Stanway, by a paiful. I must find a safer hidin'-place for them papers."

Harry, by this time had wriggled himself into such a position as to be able to get an eye on the movements of his fellow-occupant of the room,

He saw the latter on the chair, his arm in the closet.

"It's lucky Joe Tod let me into the secret of this hidden drawer in the closet," he muttered. "I might leave them here in safety, only Joe knows it himself, and there's no surety as in his blabbing."

As he spoke, there was a clicking sound, as if some spring had been touched. The next minute he stepped from the chair, holding in his hand the large black-leather pocket-book which Harry had seen in his grasp on the preceding day. He laid it on the edge of the bed, and stood a moment as if in thought.

"I know," he exclaimed, slapping his hand on his knee. "It will be safe there.—But I must fix Joe's hiding-place first."

Again mounting the chair he thrust his arm into the closet. The same clicking sound as before was audible. He stepped to the floor with an air of intense satisfaction.

"That's done," he said, "and the coast's clear. And now I'd best make a back-door flitting, for there might be awkward eyes on the front.—If they beat Jack Brunter they—Hullo! What in the blazes has become of the papers?"

There was good reason for this exclamation. The pocket-book had disappeared.

While he was occupied at the closet a hand had stolen up over the bedside, closed upon the prize, and drawn it down into the hidden regions beneath. "Well, if that ain't a blazing uncomfortable queer dodge, I wouldn't say so," he ejaculated, starting back in astonishment. "By the seven pipers, if I find who did that I'll make it hot for him!—Did that rat make for a hole under the bed?"

He stooped down to look under, at the same instant that Harry backed out, feet foremost, from the foot of the bed.

"Aha!" cried Brunter, catching sight of this movement. "That's the rat, hey?"

There was a savage expression upon his countenance as he ran around the corner of the bed, with arms outstretched to grasp the intruder.

But he had not calculated sufficiently on the agility of the premium bootblack. With a quick leap upward Harry was upon the bed. He rolled over it as lightly as if he had been a billiard ball. Lighting on his feet on the floor, with the quickness of a cat, he sprang for the door at the same instant that Brunter recovered himself and started after him.

Harry reached the door first, drew it quickly to after him, and held it with both hands.

At the same moment he gave vent to a loud "Cock-a-doodle-do!" as naturally rendered as if a genuine rooster had been present.

With a curse of savage fury, Brunter grasped the handle of the door, and pulled with all his force against the feeble strength of the boy.

Harry sustained himself for a minute; then, feeling the door was slowly yielding, he loosed his hold. In an instant it flew wide open, and Jack Brunter, who had been pulling with all his strength, went down into a heap on the floor.

Another "Cock-a-doodle-do!" came in shrill triumph from the boy's lips.

He dashed away, and none too soon, for Brunter regained his feet and was after him in an instant.

But Harry's flight was not far. The door of No. 6 he had left unlocked. Into this room he darted, locking it after him at the same instant that his foe dashed fiercely against it.

Harry's irritating cry of triumph again rung out: "Cock-a-doodle-do!" almost maddening his furious foe.

"Open the door, or I'll burst it in!" yelled the latter.

"Bu'st and be blowed!" cried Harry, back.

Brunter was as good as his word. Starting from the opposite side of the passage he flung his whole weight against the door. The insecure lock gave way, and the door flew wide open. It revealed Harry, with his body half out of the window, his hands still clinging to the sill.

With savage fury Brunter drew a pistol, and fired a point-blank shot at the boy. Harry's body suddenly drooped; his hands loosed their hold; he was gone.

CHAPTER XI.

A STERN CHASE IS A LONG ONE.

We must return to Mr. Livingston, whom Harry had left on guard over Tim Coin's ale-house.

The truth was he had just then little heart for guard duty, or for any thing save sad remembrance of his morning's bitter experience. Conjecture as he would he could not imagine the cause of Miss Gordon's strange demeanor toward him, though it seemed to him most probable that Hall Stanway had in some manner imbittered her against him.

"It is his turn now. It will be mine yet," murmured Livingston, as he stood at the corner of the street, languidly viewing the passers-by. "I am not in the best of moods for the work that boy has laid out for me; yet I imagine, if I should see the villain—"

His curling lips showed that he wanted but an incentive to rouse him to vigorous action.

That incentive soon came. Some distance down the street his eye caught sight of an approaching form, which he immediately recognized. It was that of Hall Stanway.

Livingston had no plan laid; yet evidently some definite action must be taken at once. There was no time for cautious consideration.

He remembered the well-known rule in cards—"When in doubt, play a trump," and acting on it instantly, he crossed the street, and entered Tim Coin's tap-room.

A glance around this broad-flanked, low-ceilinged apartment, showed him that everything was favor-

able to his purpose. There were no customers except a full-faced Englishman, who was sipping ale at the bar. The bar-keeper of the previous day was replaced by a half-grown boy.

Ordering a mug of ale from the latter, Livingston seated himself at a table near the window, his back turned to the bar, and his hat drawn low down over his eyes.

The foaming beverage was hardly served him when the previous customer turned to go, and as he did so he was passed in the doorway by the steps of a person entering.

Livingston did not look up, but bent himself closer than ever over his foam-crested mug.

The new-comer walked up to the bar, and addressed the boy in a voice which the listener immediately recognized as that of Stanway.

"Where is Mr. Coin?" he asked.

"He is back in the house. Do you want to see him?"

"Yes."

Livingston was well aware that the eyes of his suspicious foe would be fixed upon himself, during the absence of the boy. But he occupied himself in slowly sipping his beverage, contriving, without seeming intention, to quite hide his face from view.

This momentary dread of discovery was ended by the entrance of the landlord, who asked, in his harsh tone:

"Want to see me?"

"I only wanted to see if I could make a sale," replied Stanway. "I have an importation of fine Brown Stout, better than you often see. But let's wet our whistles before we come down to business."

A slight bustling sound followed, as the landlord drew the drink ordered. It was followed by a momentary whispering. Then Stanway said:

"Draw another mug. There is a friend of mine here will keep us company. Mr. Livingston, I shall be glad to have you drink with us."

Livingston started at this cool evidence of discovery. He was deeply flushed when he rose, and the look which he cast upon his foe was full of repressed fury.

"When I accept such an invitation it will be made by another man than Hall Stanway," he replied, with an effort to appear cool.

He turned to leave the room. As he did so his opponent gave vent to a sneering laugh, which angered Livingston almost beyond endurance.

"It is your turn now, you think," he remarked, half turning. "Make the most of it, for your villainy has nearly reached its climax. The landlord there can tell you that I have already stolen a march on your rascally scheme."

With this parting thrust Livingston left the room; but he caught a shade of pallor on Stanway's face, as if his last words had touched that gentleman in a tender point.

"It is all up in that quarter," thought Livingston, as he walked away. "They are on their guard now. I can only trust, for the present, to Harry's success."

He walked irresolutely away, turning street after street, in an utterly purposeless manner. A half-hour thus passed, at the end of which time he found himself at no great distance from his starting-point.

Indolently turning a corner into another street, he hastily drew back. For there stood Hall Stanway, not twenty paces away.

He had just met a middle-sized, ill-favored personage, who bore evident marks of haste and irritation. It was no other than Harry's furious foe, Jack Brunter.

A few hasty words passed between the confederates, and then they hurried off in great haste, their faces marked by fear and confusion. In a moment they disappeared around a neighboring corner.

Livingston hastened after them, determined not to lose the advantage which had thus unexpectedly fallen into his hands.

But for the present we must leave this pursuit, and return to the fortunes of Harry Hunter, whom we left in so perilous a situation.

His body had dropped suddenly as the pistol ball whizzed toward him; but it was not in consequence of this ball.

The window from which Harry hung was some twenty feet from the ground, but some four feet below it was the top of a window of the story below, whose shutters stood slightly ajar. Between the two was the ledge along which he had already passed.

On the violent entrance of his pursuer into the room, the boy was clinging to the window-sill, with his feet on this ledge, half inclined to make his way, as before to the adjoining window.

But the furious action of his pursuer left him but one course to pursue. He immediately let himself drop until his feet just rested on the top of the partly-open shutter below him. Then, losing his hold on the sill, his fingers caught the projecting ledge; and from there, with the agility of an acrobat, he let himself fall, and grasped the top of the shutter with his hands.

Harry's quick eye caught the situation of affairs at a glance. The window, from whose shutter he now hung, was open at the top, the upper sash being pulled down for ventilation.

In an instant the feet of the agile boy rested on the top of the sash, and he swung himself lightly through the opening. As he did so his head was for a moment thrown back. At the window from which he had just descended he caught a glimpse of the infuriated face of his pursuer, glaring down upon him, his hand grasping the pistol as if ready to send another shot after the fugitive.

Harry seemed destined to create trouble in people's kitchens. For he now found himself in a sort of outer kitchen of Joe Tod's establishment, where

two or three women were busily occupied in preparing food for the approaching dinner.

The sudden advent of the boy, in this unusual way, created an intense fright in these previous occupants of the room already terrified by the pistol shot. Screams of terror resounded through the house, and they backed off into corners, as if some wild animal had suddenly leaped in through the window.

"Don't get skeered," exclaimed Harry. "There's a chap up there firing pistols at me, and I thought I'd move. Hope you'll excuse me for makin' tracks without waitin' to be perlit."

Harry was off like a shot, through the open door. In a minute more he dashed through the bar-room, in which Joe Tod stood the picture of surprise, at the unusual uproar in the upper portions of his mansion.

All had passed so quickly that he had not yet been able to decide what course of action to take.

"What in the thunder's broke loose?" he called out, as Harry dashed past.

"There's a fellow coming down stairs will 'splain," cried Harry. "You must excuse me, I'm in a hurry to get to the post-office afore the next mail goes out."

Harry went through the door like a flash. In an instant after his pursuer burst into the room.

Joe Tod had now placed himself in the doorway.

"I'm bunged if there ain't too much of this!" he cried. "What in the blue blazes does it all mean?"

"Did that boy go through here?" asked the breathless man.

"Yes."

"Then he's my meat! The young hound has robbed me. If I don't eat him alive, blow me for a fool."

He rushed through the door, despite Joe's effort to detain him for fuller information.

"Well, I'm fond of fun," said the landlord, slowly rubbing his head, "but they're giving me an overdose to-day. I ought to have stopped that man. It must have been him that fired the pistol. If he hurts Harry, hang me if I don't go for him."

Meanwhile the pursuit was vigorously kept up along the street into which pursuer and pursued had emerged. It was a somewhat quiet locality, but few persons passing at this time of the day, and these looked with surprise on the vigorous chase.

Harry had gained some fifty yards advance on his pursuer, and though the latter was a good runner he could not compete with the agile boy, who shot like a deer along the street, gradually increasing the distance between them.

"Stop, or I'll send another bullet after you!" cried the latter.

"Send and be shot!" cried Harry, as he darted around a corner.

The chase was too furious to be long continued at that pace. Both had slackened their speed at the point where we next take them up, and at which, as we have already seen, the pursuer had unexpectedly encountered Mr. Stanway.

A dozen words told the latter what was amiss, and the chase after the flying boy was at once continued, while Mr. Livingston, in his turn, put himself on the track of the pursuers.

They were now entering on more frequented streets, and were forced to moderate their pace, both from exhaustion, and from the difficulty of movement.

It was hardly safe for the villains to raise the hue-and-cry against the boy. They preferred to do their own work in this line.

This double pursuit continued for some little time, Harry slackening his pace as he lost sight of his pursuers, and fancied that he had thrown them off his track.

He was, indeed, quite out of breath when he stopped his flight at the City Hall, toward which he had directed his course with the same sort of instinct as that with which a hunted fox seeks his hole.

Harry took a seat, breathing violently, while a crowd of his young co-laborers gathered round him, asking him multitudinous questions as to the cause of his flight.

The boy troubled himself less to answer their questions than he did to assure himself of the security of the precious package which he had hurriedly thrust into his inner vest-pocket.

"It's nothing, boys," he indifferently remarked, in answer to their questions. "I've jest been scotting around a bit, that's all. Practicing for the six days' run, in the international walk-round."

"There he is now. That's the young thief. Grab him!" came an excited voice near by.

Harry started to his feet, and looked hastily around. There, not twenty feet away, and rapidly approaching, were the forms of his pursuers, Hall Stanway and Jack Brunter. His quick eye also caught, at about the same distance behind them, the figure of Mr. Livingston.

But the voice he had heard came from none of these. In his quick glance around he had recognized still another figure, that of the supercilious James, the servant of Mr. Gordon.

It was he who had spoken, and, at the same instant, the hand of a policeman fell heavily upon Harry's shoulder, and a stern voice said:

"Come along now, you young hound! None of your monkey tricks with me. You'd best come quietly."

"What will I come for?" asked Harry, boldly turning upon him. "What have I done?"

"You'll find that out soon enough, my young rooster. I've got a warrant for you—that'll do for now." He was was dragging Harry away, when another voice sternly asked:

"What does this mean, sir? What has the boy done?"

"I'll tell you, Mr. Livingston," answered James.

"The audacious little villain has stole a valuable diamond ring from Miss Gordon."

"A diamond ring!" cried Livingston, in surprise.

"I don't believe he ever did it."

"I fancy he did, then," rejoined Stanway, a look of triumph coming upon his face. "I charge him, too, with stealing a number of valuable papers from a friend of mine. Where are you going to take him, officer?"

"Before Justice Bigsby."

"Very well. I will be there to substantiate our charge."

"And I, to have a word in the matter," said Livingston, to himself.

As for Harry, he seemed confused, but not a whit frightened. At the mention of the diamond ring a quick light flashed into his face. He remembered what he had seen through the open window at the Gordon mansion.

CHAPTER XII.

BEFORE JUSTICE BIGSBY.

It was no pleasant sensation for Harry Hunter, to find himself the occupant of a police cell, and charged with the commission of a serious crime. In the last twenty-four hours he had passed through a multitude of new experiences, and had his wits sharpened more than they had been in weeks before.

During all his life until now he had been as free as a bird, going and coming when and where he chose, and doing almost what he pleased. But in all that time no one could have accused him of doing any thing dishonest, and it galled him bitterly to be thus charged with crime.

"It is that fellow, Stanway, who is at the bottom of it," he said to himself. "And I s'pose if I tell what I've seen nobody'll believe me. I could bring the boys to prove my character—but who's-a-goin' to believe boys? They ain't got no character—specially bootblacks."

While Harry thus occupied himself in his uncomfortable cell in bitter reflections on the uncertainty of human justice, other events in which he was destined to be connected were proceeding elsewhere.

A hearing on the charge against him had been fixed for three o'clock that afternoon, and word had been sent to the Gordon mansion that the arrest had been made, and that witnesses should be on hand at the above hour.

It was with surprise and indignation that Alice Gordon received this requisition to be present at the police court of Justice Bigsby at three o'clock that afternoon, to give evidence in regard to the loss of her diamond ring, against Harry Hunter, the supposed thief.

A moment's thought convinced her of the source of this arrest, and she walked hastily to her father's room. Here she found the invalid still seated in his easy-chair, enjoying the morning paper. He was a man easily elated and easily depressed, and the hope which Livingston had given him that morning had done him more good than all the medicine he had taken.

"What does this mean, father?" she asked, with some sternness of tone. "I am told that the boy who was here yesterday has been arrested for the theft of my ring. I certainly made no such charge against him."

"I did, daughter," returned Mr. Gordon, his face slightly flushing. "You would never recover your ring if you go on believing everybody innocent. Somebody stole it, and there was nobody but that boy to do it."

"He had nothing to do with it," she positively rejoined, "and I am very sorry that this false charge has been laid against him. I would not have it on my conscience to have destroyed the youth's self-respect."

"Self-respect!" laughed Mr. Gordon. "The self-respect of a bootblack! Well that is slightly rich."

"Why not?" asked Alice. "There is nothing dishonest or discreditable in the business. A bootblack earns his money as honestly as a mechanic or a merchant. That he is a poor boy is not dishonorable. Nor is it a crime to have to work for a living."

"Now don't go on ridiculously, Alice," replied her father, making a wry face. "You know I don't believe in theories. I have nothing against bootblacks in the mass. But who stole the ring—that's the question? I hardly imagine you would charge Stanway or Livingston with it. There is nobody but this boy who could have done it."

"But that is not sufficient evidence against the boy."

"The ring may be found on him; I suppose that would satisfy your scruples."

"It will not," she replied somewhat triumphantly.

"Why will it not?"

"Because it is here," was her unexpected answer. "I have it in my hand," and she displayed the missing diamond. "He can hardly be guilty then, even if he is a bootblack."

"How is that, girl?" exclaimed her father angrily. "Have you made all this pother for nothing? The ring was not lost, then?"

"It was stolen," she returned, "but not by the boy. As it has been returned to me I prefer to let the matter rest."

"But who stole it?"

"Excuse me, father, for not answering that. There are some secrets which are best buried in oblivion. There was a deep sense of pain on her face as she spoke. "I am sorry you acted without consulting me."

"Oh, you can easily clear the boy. You will have to be present at the hearing."

"I suppose so," she returned, with an expression as if the necessity was a very distasteful one.

But we must close this interview, and hurry forward toward the hour set for the hearing of Harry Hunter, on the charge of theft.

The police court was located in a not very desirable part of a not very fashionable street, and Alice Gordon looked around with an expression of utter distaste as she found herself in a locality widely different from any to which she had been accustomed.

As she approached the office of Justice Bigsby she encountered Mr. Livingston, who was walking, somewhat disconsolately, in the same direction.

His face lighted up on recognizing her, yet he approached her with a hesitating diffidence.

A quick flush had come upon her face, followed by a cold, stern expression. She drew herself up haughtily and waited his approach.

"Miss Gordon," he said, "I am very sorry for this arrest. Yesterday you did not believe the boy guilty. Have you further evidence against him now, justifying you in having him arrested?"

"It was not my doing," she coldly replied, "I am here to clear him of this charge, and I call on you to aid me."

"Why, certainly," he rejoined, "so far as I can. Unfortunately I can only speak as to his general character."

"You can do much more," she answered, looking him sternly in the eye. "It is your duty to clear him, no matter how unpleasant it may prove to yourself."

"Unpleasant to myself!" rejoined Livingston, in a puzzled tone. "I am sure I do not know what you mean. Anything I can do will certainly not be unpleasant to myself."

She looked at him in silence for several seconds, with the same stern glance.

"This assumption of surprise is a very strange one, Mr. Livingston," she severely remarked. "Why you should make it in my presence I cannot understand. There are circumstances in which revelations cannot be confined to two persons. This is one of those occasions. If you do not yourself take measures to clear the boy of this charge, I shall be obliged to, however disagreeable the duty may prove."

She walked haughtily away, leaving him the picture of astonishment, with which was mingled a growing anger. His eyes flashed as he looked after her.

"What can Alice Gordon mean?" he muttered, bitterly. "She takes a tone with me as if I was a criminal, and was called on to confess some crime of which I am profoundly ignorant. There is some strange misapprehension here."

Meanwhile the case had been called before Justice Bigsby, and that self-sufficient personage was busy in hearing testimony. He was a burly, full-faced man, to whose complexion high-living had given a ruddy tinge which made his face glow like the morning sun.

His dignity was simply indescribable. The very desk and walls of his court seemed permeated with a reflection of this dignity, and it was almost impossible to retain any self-assurance before this important official.

The servants of the Gordon mansion had been notified to attend, and were being closely questioned by the justice.

James had given in his testimony in regard to the boy's behavior on the previous day. According to this witness he had tried to force himself into Mr. Gordon's house, and had only been restrained by an exercise of haughty firmness on his part.

He had finally run away in fear on the approach of Mr. Stanway.

"Ah! afraid of Mr. Stanway, was he?" cried the examiner, with a chuckle. "Why should he be afraid of Stanway? That has a guilty look. Is Stanway here?"

"Yes, sir," replied Mr. Stanway, stepping forward from where he had stood by the side of his co-conspirator, Jack Brunter.

"What do you know about this case?" questioned the examiner. "Why is the boy afraid of you?"

"Because he played a rascally trick on me, and I owed him a chastisement for it."

"I'll tell you, judge," broke in Harry, at this point. "I blacked that 'coon's boots, and he wouldn't pay me, so I just made a charge ag'in' him in the boot-black's daybook."

"Ah! what was that?"

"I give him a dab of blackin' on his knee, so that every time he saw it he'd know he owed me ten cents. That's all."

"I believe you're a villainous young rascal," cried the justice, looking at him with withering severity.

"Who is the next witness?"

"She is here, your honor," replied the policeman, who had arrested Harry. "It is Sally Brown, servant at Mr. Gordon's house."

The justice, after the necessary preliminary questions as to name and residence, proceeded to examine Sally in regard to her knowledge of the case.

She was rather favorably inclined toward Harry, and disposed to screen him, but she managed to make such a medley of evidence in regard to fence-climbing, potato-paring, pea-shelling, toe-smashing, and finger-scalding, that it was almost impossible to get head or tail of what it all meant.

"What in the world has all this bosh to do with the stealing of a diamond ring?" exclaimed the justice, impatiently. "We know that the boy was driven away from the front door, climbed the fence, and got into the kitchen. He didn't steal the ring out of this good girl's potato-pan I hope?"

"I made a ring out of a potato skin," said Harry. "and I flung it on the floor; and it made just the nicest S you ever saw. I s'pose that means that I'm goin' to get married to Sally."

"You hush up!" cried Sally, with a deep blush of confusion.

"Let the prisoner be silent!" yelled the justice. "Do you forget where you are, sirrah? You may not feel like joking when I am done with you."

Evidently Harry had prejudiced his own case by this lack of appreciation of the dignity proper to a police court. Justice Bigsby eyed him with a glance of deep malignity.

"The most important witness has not yet arrived," remarked the policeman. "Miss Gordon, the owner of the lost ring, has been notified to attend."

"I hope she does not imagine that a court of justice is a ball-room, or an opera-house, where it is fashionable to come late," remarked the justice. "I shall discharge the prisoner if this delay continues. Has he been searched?"

"Yes, your honor. There was no trace of the ring found upon him, or at his residence."

"What was found upon him?"

"The leather pocket-book which lies upon your desk. It was taken from an inside pocket of the prisoner's vest."

"Ah!" exclaimed the justice, lifting the package.

"I remember now. There has been a distinct charge laid against him for the theft of this. Is the prosecutor present?"

"Yes, your honor. It was stolen from my room at the hotel this morning," answered Jack Brunter, stepping forward. "I caught that boy in the act, but he got away from me. I followed him, and was about to catch him, when the policeman here arrested him on another charge."

"So he's been doing a double job of robbery," said the justice, bending his eyes severely on Harry, who failed to quail before this withering glance.

"What proof have you of this charge? Have you witnesses?"

"I can have, your honor," replied Brunter. "And Mr. Stanway here can testify that the pocket-book is my property, and that he joined me in the chase of the boy."

Stanway was closely questioned as to his knowledge respecting this new charge. His evidence seemed sufficient to prove that the pocket-book was the property of Brunter. He swore directly to having seen it in his possession.

"And I hope your honor will return it to me now," appealed Brunter. "I have important business in Chicago, and must set out at once. I have lost valuable time already by the delay which this young thief has caused me. There are papers there which concern a most important transaction, which must be attended to without delay. As I have proved my property I hope you will not detain me any longer."

"Don't let his thieving fingers touch it, judge!" cried Harry. "It ain't no more his than it is yours. The long-nosed, squint-eyed galoot stole it himself."

"We shall have to look that boy up again if he is not still," roared the justice. "This pocket-book seems to be your property, Mr. Brunter."

"I hardly think so," spoke another voice.

They all turned round at this interruption. The speaker was recognized by many of them as Mr. Livingston. Miss Gordon had also entered at the same moment, and seated herself on a chair proffered her by James.

"What means this interruption?" queried the justice, angrily.

"It means that the boy has told you the truth," spoke Mr. Livingston, in a calm voice. "The papers in that pocket-book are stolen property, and I here charge the man who claims them with theft. I ask you to retain them in your possession until I can prove my words. And also to not let this man escape until my charge is heard."

"See that Mr. Brunter does not leave the court," said the justice to the policeman, as he noticed that long-nosed gentleman edging toward the door.

CHAPTER XIII.

ALICE GORDON TESTIFIES.

MR. STANWAY sprung forward at these words, a great show of indignation in his face.

"Justice Bigsby—your honor—" he cried angrily, "you have no right in law or justice to detain Mr. Brunter, or keep his papers after acknowledging that he has proved their ownership. As for this man—"

"Silence!" roared the justice, swelling with a sense of injured importance. "How dare you address me, sir, in this violent tone? I will have you know that the dignity of this court shall be sustained. Nor will I be taught my duty by you."

"I demand my papers," exclaimed Brunter, taking the cue from his associate. "If they are not returned to me at once, I shall bring suit for their recovery, and for heavy damages."

"And I shall charge you with stealing them," returned Livingston. "And, your honor, I am prepared to prove this to your satisfaction."

"Very well, gentlemen," responded the dignified official. "Let me hear no more of this. I shall listen to nothing more while the present case is on trial. But I shall retain those papers until their ownership is settled, and I forbid any party concerned from leaving the room until I have had time to investigate the matter."

"I shall leave the room!" replied Stanway haughtily. "I had not heard before that a justice's court was a prison cell, where parties could be detained at the word of the little autocrat upon the bench. I shall leave the room, and it will be at your peril if you seek to detain me. The rights of an American citizen are not at the beck and call of the whole government of New York; and far less of one of its self-important officials."

He walked haughtily toward the door, followed, in a sneaking manner, by Jack Brunter.

Justice Bigsby had never been so openly brow-beaten in his own court before. His face grew crimson as he saw this open disregard of his authority. But he was equal to the occasion.

"Officer," he cried sternly, "close the door, and see that no one leaves the room. What is your name?"

This question was addressed to Livingston.

"Edward Livingston," was the reply.

"You prefer a charge against these two men of the theft of these papers, and ask for a warrant for their arrest and detention till the charge can be heard?"

"I do."

"Very well, sir."

Justice Bigsby had already drawn before him a legal form and was busily writing. His eyes rested with a glance of triumph on the two baffled conspirators, who had paused, with disconcerted looks, in their intended departure.

"Sign your name here, Mr. Livingston," said the justice.

This request was immediately complied with.

"Here is your warrant, officer," continued the justice. "Detain these two men as prisoners until I am through with the present case. If they seek to escape you will lock them up in a cell."

Stanway had played his trump card, and lost the trick. There was a shade of pallor on his face as he withdrew into a corner of the room, and entered into a whispered conference with his confederate.

"Guess you won't be racing bootblacks round the City Hall soon again," cried the irrepressible boy, his face lit up with triumph. "You're a big 'coon, you are, old Stanway, but when the judge puts his foot down your dog's dead."

"Silence," exclaimed the official, but not with as much asperity as before. He liked to be called judge.

"Are there any other witnesses present in the case now before me?" he asked.

"Miss Gordon is here," answered James.

"Will Miss Gordon please step forward?" remarked the justice. He had caught a glimpse of Miss Gordon's face and fashionable attire, and deemed it judicious to assume a more polite tone toward this *rara avis*, so widely distinct from the ordinary customers.

The fair witness advanced at this request. There was a tremor on her lips, and she seemed to be greatly shaken in her self-possession.

This partly arose from the strange scene she had just witnessed, the arrest of Mr. Stanway on a charge of theft preferred by Mr. Livingston. But this was not the only cause of her disquiet. There were mental troubles of her own which made this ordeal a very severe one to her.

Being put upon oath, she at the request of the justice, detailed the events connected with the loss of her ring.

"But," she continued. "I prefer not to have this charge prosecuted any further. I do not believe the lad guilty, and wish to have the suit discontinued."

"It is not a question of your belief, but of the evidence," calmly remarked the justice. "You are not the prosecutor in this case, Miss Gordon?"

"No, sir; it is my father."

"Then I cannot discontinue it at your request. It must go on."

"But there are the best of reasons why it should not go on," she earnestly repeated.

"Will you name them, Miss Gordon?"

"This is the first and strongest," she replied, holding up her hand, on one finger of which glittered a large diamond. "I have here in my possession the stolen ring! It has been returned to me!"

"But that does not absolve the thief," said the surprised justice. "Your father has had this boy charged with the theft of your ring."

"I never touched the old ring," interrupted Harry. "What good would a diamond ring be to me, I'd like to know? Wouldn't I be a pretty figure blackin' boots with a diamond like that on my hands?"

Harry's tone of scorn and contempt raised an involuntary laugh, which was sternly repressed by the justice.

"If you can clear the prisoner, Miss Gordon, I shall be glad to discharge him. Have you further evidence to offer as to who returned you the ring?"

"No, sir," she replied, in an agitated tone.

She glanced around the room as she did so. Her eyes encountered those of Mr. Livingston, who stood just behind her. There was an appealing look in her face which surprised and troubled him. He stood irresolute, not knowing what to make of this expression.

"Then," said the justice resolutely, "I see nothing before me but to commit the boy for trial on the charge of theft. I cannot lay aside my duty, Miss Gordon, for the purpose of obliging you in what seems but a mere whim of charity."

"He did not steal the ring!" she cried, in a pained tone. "I have evidence to the contrary."

"Very well," returned the justice. "You will please remember that you are sworn to tell the whole truth."

Miss Gordon seemed deeply distressed. The color came and went in her face; her lips quivered, she hesitated, and continued silent.

Again she looked around the room, and fixed her eyes on the face of Livingston. His surprise had changed into a feeling of anger. What meant these appealing looks? Did she wish him to criminate himself in some way so as to clear the boy? He stood impassive, with a slightly stern look upon his features.

Some wavering resolution seemed strengthened in Miss Gordon by his demeanor. Her lip curled; her eyes flashed. She stepped up closer to the high

desk which sheltered the portly form of Justice Bigsby.

"I have evidence which will convince you," she remarked. "I do not care to have it made public, but the lad must not suffer for the crime of another. Will you please read this letter?"

"You are just an angel, Miss Gordon," cried Harry, enthusiastically. "I'd go to jail for six years if it was going to do you any good. I swear I would. But I know the chap that took the ring. I seen him do it myself, and I wouldn't go to jail two minutes to save him from hanging—'cause he ain't worth the rope that he'll stretch some day, if he gets what he's born for."

As he spoke the justice was intently reading the letter she had handed him.

His expression changed as he did so. A look of surprise came upon his features.

"This is certainly an unexpected piece of evidence, Miss Gordon," he said. "Do I understand you that this letter accompanied the returned ring?"

"It did, sir."

The eyes of Stanway flashed with triumph as he heard these words. They seemed to convey more meaning to him than to the others present. Harry was watching him closely, and failed not to note this change of expression.

"Then the accused is certainly clear of the crime with which he is charged," remarked the justice. "He will consider himself discharged from custody."

"Thankee, judge," replied Harry, gratefully. "If you'd only asked me I'd told you long ago that I didn't steal nobody's diamond. But you asked everybody else 'cept me. How was you going to find out what I done by askin' somebody else, I'd like to know? Why, I'd sooner have a box of prime blackin' than a diamond, any day."

Harry's handsome face was flushed with joy as he walked out among his friends, and began a busy process of shaking hands with all present, as if all must necessarily take part in his pleasure.

"I wish to withdraw any further proceedings," said Miss Gordon. "The party accused has been proved innocent. I decline to prosecute any one else."

"This will not do!" cried Stanway, stepping angrily forward. "No one can be cleared on concealed evidence, even in a petty court like this. I demand that the prisoner be recalled, or that the evidence clearing him be made public."

"I decline to have the letter read," responded Miss Gordon.

"Very well, then. It cannot be admitted as evidence, without being made public. Even Justice Bigsby knows enough of the law to know that."

The justice cast an angry glance at the speaker; but the latter stood with a determined attitude and expression.

"He is right, Miss Gordon," replied the justice. "The letter must be publicly read. Secret evidence cannot be admitted."

Miss Gordon flushed and paled. She glanced about her with something of the expression of the hunted deer.

"Why should it not be read?" asked Mr. Livingston, addressing her. "If it contains any matter not bearing on this charge, that can be suppressed."

She looked at him with a strange glance.

"Is it possible that you wish it read?" she queried, in a low voice.

"I don't perceive why I should object to it," was his astonished reply.

She haughtily drew herself up to her full height. Her tones became cold, her face impassive, as she said:

"Very well then. I withdraw my objections to its being read."

The justice had noticed this by-play with wondering eyes. There was evidently some secret feeling between these two persons. He carefully adjusted his spectacles, looked impressively for a moment over those present, and then read the letter, as follows:

"DEAR MISS GORDON: You will be more than surprised—you will be horrified—by receiving this note, with its contents, in my handwriting. Do not ask me what induced me to take the ring. That I cannot answer. Your jewel casket stood there—at my hand. A sudden temptation—from the evil one, I verily believe—came upon me. I could not resist it. It was but a moment, and I had the stolen jewel in my possession. I dared not seek to return it, for you entered at that moment.

"But when you afterward told me of its loss, and accused another of the theft, you stirred in me the sting of conscience. My whole soul is burning with remorse. I dare not keep it longer. I return it to you, not asking you to forgive me, but hoping that you will not altogether despise me.

"Shall we not let this unfortunate matter die out of our memories? I shall not refer to it again, nor change my demeanor toward you. I hope you will show your forgiveness by not changing yours toward me."

The reader paused and looked slowly over the assembly, all of whom were spell-bound in surprise. The eyes of Alice were fixed on Livingston, whose face was a medley of emotion.

"But the name? The signature?" cried Stanway.

"It is signed only by initials, E. L.," remarked the justice.

"E. L.!" exclaimed Livingston, in a hot fervor of feeling. "My initials!"

"Yes; and your handwriting," said Alice, in an agitated voice.

"Let me see that lying scroll!" he ejaculated, striding forward, and snatching it from the hands of the reader.

An instant his eye glanced over it, and then he exclaimed:

"It is as I thought! It is a forgery!"

"What!" cried Alice, with bloodless lips. "Can I have been so deceived? Oh, may God grant that it be as you say!"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LEATHER POCKET-BOOK.

MR. GORDON was not quite at ease in his mind in regard to his action of that morning. The indignation of his daughter had troubled him, despite himself.

Behind her quiet manner and amiable disposition, she had a force of character which his somewhat vacillating nature could not but yield to, and his frequent obstinacy usually ended in his giving her her own way, whenever any important question arose between them.

He was therefore ill at ease, particularly when he learned that her daughter had left the house to testify in the case of the charge against Harry.

He walked his room backward and forward, in a fretful, uneasy manner.

"I believe everybody would be better off, if they'd quit meddling in matters where women are concerned," he muttered. "Alice is always right, and I am always wrong; and I expect that this business will turn out, as usual, with showing that I have been an unfeeling old meddler.—Ha! there is the bell! I wonder if any one is left to answer it; or if they have all gone away on this business?"

It appeared that they were not all gone, for one of his servants immediately afterward brought him up a telegraph message.

"Ah! what can this be?" he asked himself. "Tell the messenger to wait a minute. I will see if there is any answer needed."

He tore open the sheet with a nervous motion, but his eyes lit up with a flash of inward fire as they glanced over the scroll.

"Good news! good news!" he shouted, snatching up his pillow, and flinging it lightly into the air.

"The Good Speed is safe! She is in port! My ship is in port!—A truce to your medicines. That is the best medicine. I am myself again, I am on my feet in every sense."

"Is there any answer?" asked the servant, returning.

"Yes, answer that I am well, and will prove it by coming into town immediately."

And he was as good as his word. The hopeful news had warmed his veins like a genuine elixir-of-life. In ten minutes he had thrown off all the insignia of illness, and was dressed for out-door exercise.

"That's the beauty of your nervous troubles," he cried, with boyish enthusiasm. "Only invigorates your mind, and your whole body is enlivened. But won't they be surprised to see me!"

They were certainly somewhat surprised in Justice Bigsby's court when Mr. Gordon opened the door, and walked into the room.

A cry of alarm burst from his daughter, as she ran toward him, caught him by the arm, and looked with frightened eyes into his face.

"It is myself, Alice," he said cheerfully. "I am all right again. Good news has cured me. Have you not heard? Has not Livingston told you?"

"No, father," and she looked curiously from one to the other.

Livingston, with flushed face, and an angry curl to his lip, still had his eyes fixed on the letter he had just seized.

"He knows, Alice. He just telegraphed me that the Good Speed was safe—was in harbor. It is this that has put me on my feet again, as sound as man as any here."

"I declare again that this is a forgery!" exclaimed Livingston, striking the letter with his open hand, and too deep excited to heed what was proceeding so near at hand.

"That remains to be proved," said the justice, coldly. He was annoyed by the abrupt snatching of the letter from his hand.

"Now see here, judge," cried Harry, earnestly. "Mr. Livingston had no more to do with that ring than I had, and I can prove it. If you want bail for him I'm just the fellow that'll go his bail. 'Cause he ain't a-goin' to jail on no such a bizness as that."

"What is the matter?" asked Mr. Gordon, as he pressed up and took Livingston warmly by the hand. "Is there a charge against you?"

"Is that my handwriting?" asked Livingston, forcing the letter into his hand.

Mr. Gordon looked at it for a minute or two in deep surprise. He caught the sense of the letter, and turned quickly to his daughter.

"Was it this that ailed you this morning, Alice?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then I have made an old ninny of myself again, that is sure."

"But do you recognize the handwriting?" asked the justice.

"The handwriting!" his eyes perused it again attentively. "Why it's a deuced clever imitation of Ned Livingston's hand. But I'll swear it's a forgery, for all that; for I know his writing better than I do my own."

"Will you testify to this under oath, Mr. Gordon?" asked Livingston.

"Certainly. Under ten oaths. There's some deuce of a sharp rascal been at work here, Ned."

The face of Alice had reddened, and then grown deathly pale. She still clung to her father's arm, but her downcast eyes only slowly and timidly raised themselves to Livingston's face.

"Can you forgive me?" she murmured. "My manner! My scornful tone! Oh! how strange and cruel they must have seemed to you!"

"Forgive you! Alice!" was all he said; but the

touch of his hand, and the look in his eyes, supplied the rest.

"And now as you big folks have had your say I s'pose it's no harm if a little chap like me puts a word in sideways," cried Harry. "You ain't got all the evidence about this case yet, judge. I know something 'bout it, which I'll reel out if you'll only let me."

"Very well. Let me hear what you have to say."

"I ain't swore yet, judge," said Harry, earnestly. "I want you to swear me, and just as hard as you can. I ain't goin' to say a word that isn't the truth, but I want to be tied right down to it."

"Very well, my boy," returned the justice, smiling. He had, somehow, taken a sudden fancy to Harry; perhaps from the latter's dubbing him judge.

The boy was at once put upon oath, and asked to tell what he knew about the theft of the ring.

"I know the thief, your honor. I know him just like you know a book. And that's him; that sneaking old cheat in the corner there," and Harry's finger pointed accusingly at Stanway.

The latter sprang fiercely forward at this unlooked-for accusation; yet he could not keep back a guilty pallor from his face.

"Back, sir!" exclaimed the justice. "Officer, see that no violence is permitted."

"Oh, let him come on, judge," remarked Harry indifferently. "I don't care a peanut for him. It's natural, when an apple-thief gets stung by a hornet, that he'll jump. Best let the officer hold me back, for I ain't done yet with Mr. Stanway."

The officer had to exercise his strength and authority to force back the infuriated man, whose lips were white as with the foam of passion.

"He owes me for a shine-up, your honor," said Harry. "I told him I'd get paid for it yet, and if I don't there's no use talking."

Harry proceeded to describe his adventure of the previous day, at the Gordon mansion. He particularly detailed his climb to the parlor window, and how he had seen Stanway open the casket and take from it the diamond ring.

The face of the accused man was a study as this evidence was given in. Every eye was fixed upon him, and only anger seemed to sustain him from utter quailing.

"Is the word of a lying little bootblack like that to be taken against a man of my known standing?" he ejaculated. "He has already acknowledged a spite against me. This is the way he is taking to be revenged upon me."

"Miss Alice can have a word in that," continued Harry. "Maybe she won't forget how she came to raise the winder curtain, and how she heard something drop outside?"

Alice, with much surprise, assented to the truth of the boy's remark.

"That was me that dropped," proceeded Harry. "I just let go, and fetched up at the bottom. And then I crawled in under the bushes."

"Go on," said the justice.

"That's 'bout all, judge," answered Harry. "Only that I've got a notion that Miss Alice is a bit sweet on Mr. Livingston, and that old Stanway's jealous. Don't you see his game? He wants to get a clear track, so that he can have the game all his own way."

Alice blushed crimson at this indiscreet suggestion of Harry's. Her eyes fell before the ardent glances of her lover. Her confusion was painful to behold.

"That's 'bout all, judge," continued Harry, in some surprise at the sensation he had created. "Bout all in this bizness I mean. There's the little matter of the papers yet."

"Can this be possible?" asked Mr. Gordon, looking earnestly at Stanway. "That you—that a man like Hall Stanway, whom I would have trusted with my fortune— But there must be a mistake in this."

"Not an ounce of a mistake," ejaculated Harry positively. "cept that you've trusted him too much. I wouldn't like to trust him with the valley of a bent pin. I trusted him for a shine once; but I've got it charged up ag'in him."

"We are wasting time here," said the justice impatiently. "Mr. Livingston, these men are under arrest on your charge against them of robbery. I am prepared to give them a hearing."

"Will you please examine that leather book in your possession, and tell us of what its contents consist?" asked Livingston.

"I deny your right to do anything of the kind!" exclaimed Stanway. "I claim that it was stolen from Mr. Brunter here. Its contents have nothing to do with the question. No one has a right to open it."

"Are you not rather anxious about Mr. Brunter?" asked the justice, in a sarcastic tone. "Let Mr. Brunter speak for himself."

"He has given my sentiments, to a hair," responded Brunter.

"In the first place," replied the official, "you have not proved it to be yours. In the second place, you are charged with stealing it yourself. Now it seems to me that the best evidence of its ownership may lie in the contents of the book itself. I shall therefore take the responsibility of opening it."

Suiting the action to the word, the dignified official took a thick mass of papers from the well-swollen book, his eyes fixed with a defiant expression on the brace of conspirators as he did so. They were pallid, haggard, quailing; they had played their last card, and lost the game. Stanway looked about him like a caged tiger, as if half inclined to make a burst for liberty. But the size and stern look of the burly officer, who stood near him, rather dissuaded him from his idea.

All present remained in expectant silence while Justice Bigsby slowly ran his eyes over the mass of

papers. Then, pushing back his spectacles on his forehead, he looked for a moment over the room, as if to properly impress every one with a sense of the importance of the impending disclosure:

"I find," he at length remarked, "that we have here a valuable series of United States government bonds. And I also find that they are not the property of either Mr. Brunter or Mr. Stanway, but of Mr. George Gordon."

"My property!" cried Mr. Gordon, bursting forward. "Are they the bonds that were stolen from me? Oh! that would be too much good news for one day. Answer me, Livingston, Stanway—are they my lost bonds?"

"I know nothing about them," growled Stanway, with affected indifference.

"They are the bonds which were stolen from you," replied Livingston, "and I hope to convince Mr. Stanway that he does know something about them. I got on their track by a mere accident, and—with the help of our wide-awake bootblack here—succeeded in recovering them."

"You can bet we succeeded," supplied Harry, earnestly. "It weren't no slouch of a game, neither, for I had to jump out of windows, and dodge pistol bullets, in the most amazing way you ever dreamt of."

The justice, who had been listening with the interest of curiosity to this colloquy, now returned to a sense of his relaxed dignity.

"This is all too informal," he exclaimed. "I cannot listen to any more such irregular proceedings. This case must be heard under oath. Who are your witnesses, Mr. Livingston?"

But we will not detail the evidence given in this hearing, as the reader is pretty thoroughly acquainted with it already.

The most important feature in it was Mr. Gordon's sworn recognition of the bonds as his, and his testimony that they had been stolen from his office. He was not sure whether or not either of the accused had been in his office on the day of their disappearance.

The evidence of Livingston and that of Harry was next taken, that of the latter exciting great interest as he graphically described his adventures in search of the papers.

"I fished 'em at last," he triumphantly concluded, "but I calculate they'd have snatched 'em from me if your honor hadn't been kind enough to have me grabbed by a policeman at that identical minute. They was a-comin' down on me like a 2:40 two-hoss team on the home stretch when this gentleman here, with the forty pound muscles, gobbled me up and toted me off. And that was what flung old Stanway."

Harry's voice was full of triumphant scorn as he concluded. He evidently fancied his foe demolished.

"I do not see any evidence bearing directly upon Mr. Stanway," remarked the justice, doubtfully. "His evident anxiety to favor the other prisoner may arise from other causes."

"But the letter signed Jack Brunter, which was found in his pocket?" queried Livingston.

"Yes, yes, that is certainly important," replied the justice, after again reading it.

"And we have the evident collusion of the two men through the whole business," said Livingston impatiently.

"And there's the letter that was left for Jack Brunter at Tim Coin's," suggested Harry. "And which I confiscated."

"The one signed S?" asked the justice, picking it up. "Can any one testify to this handwriting?"

Mr. Livingston and Mr. Gordon both examined it, and swore positively that it was Stanway's writing.

The countenance of the latter had brightened somewhat during the last few minutes; but it fell again when Justice Bigsby turned severely toward him, and said:

"Your case is made out, Mr. Livingston. I shall commit these two men for trial on the charge of larceny."

CHAPTER XV.

WHAT HARRY SAW THROUGH THE DOOR.

We must step forward a few days before again taking up the thread of our story.

During these days events had worked well for the interests of Mr. Gordon. As for himself his hasty action on the day of the hearing had proved too much for his strength. It was the factitious vigor of high excitement which had sustained him through that stirring scene; and the inevitable reaction had followed—he was again a nerveless invalid.

Yet this was but temporary. The good tidings which had come to him, were certain soon to bring him permanently to his feet again.

The creditors had been advised to withdraw any intended suits, and had been again convened together. And this time they came less unwillingly than before, since it had become the whisper of the town that a most decided improvement had taken place in Mr. Gordon's affairs.

And it may be well imagined that they were not long in accepting an improved offer of one hundred cents on the dollar, in payment of their claims; or in granting to Mr. Gordon the slight extension of time he desired, so that he might get his affairs in order.

"I always had a notion that Hall Stanway was something of a sneak," remarked bluff Mr. Brown. "Mr. Gordon was too confounded unsuspecting. I only hope now that he'll squeeze him as hard as he deserves."

"But who's to be trusted?" queried another merchant. "I did not like the man, but I did not dream he would steal."

"There is another matter on which I desire to speak," said Livingston, changing the subject. "You broke up our former meeting in consequence of hearing that a suit had been brought, in Rochester, against Mr. Gordon."

"Why, yes," rejoined Mr. Brown. "The business began to look blamed thin."

"I told you then that our settlement would not be affected by that suit," rejoined Livingston. "I suppose some of you went away with the idea that I was trying some sharp practice upon you. But I happened to know that the suit was based on a claim that would not hold water. I am happy to be able to announce to you this morning that it has failed. The court has disallowed it."

After the breaking up of this meeting Mr. Livingston made his way toward Mr. Gordon's mansion to report its results.

Harry Hunter had also sought the same locality. This was at the desire of Alice Gordon, who wished to see the boy.

But instead of disturbing the high-toned James at the "big front door," our young friend made his way to the area gate, where he was admitted by Sally, the kitchen girl.

"Got any pertaters to pare, or any peas to shell?" asked Harry innocently. "I'm a hoss at parin' and shellin', and I'm goin' around, taking in jobs."

"Yes, you're mighty good at it," returned Sally, indignantly. "The last time there was more potato on the parings than there was in the pan. And as for the peas—"

"I wonder if a fellow could help spillin' the peas," interrupted Harry, "when you two were dancing Highland flings all over the floor, and scaring the life out of a chap?"

"It was all your fault," retorted Sally. "I don't want any more of your help."

"But ain't you got no cabbage to slice, or no onions to peel, or no—"

"Don't let him in here!" screamed the other woman, laughingly, as she caught sight of Harry. "I don't want any more hot-irons on my toes."

"I thought maybe I might get a job at shinin'," remarked Harry, perching himself on the back of a chair. "I've brung my box, you see; and I'm open for business. Won't you have them little number one shoes of yours toned up, Sally?"

"Guess not," said Sally, laughing. "Number one, indeed! I don't set up for a Cinderella yet."

"And how about your number sevens, Molly?"

"I will let you feel the weight of them if you don't leave here soon," answered Molly, angrily.

"That's just like you women," responded Harry, with a sigh. "You take me down just the same, whether I say you've got big feet or little feet. Ain't you got no shinin' you want done? I'll do anything for you, Sally, if it's to polish up the fryin'-pan."

"Now none of your nonsense, Harry," said the smiling girl. "You're a vexatious little imp; but I like you, for all that. When you was telling how you fooled that Stanway, the other day, it was as much as I could do to keep my hands off of you. I wanted to take you in my arms just there, and kiss you, for a smart little Handsome Harry."

"It ain't too late yet," exclaimed Harry, moving toward her.

With a scream of laughter Sally threw her apron over his head, and ran from the room. But he was too alert to be thus checked. In a moment he had released himself from the blinding folds of the apron, and was after her.

Through the entry, through room after room, the chase continued. Finally she darted up stairs, still so full of merriment that she could hardly run.

Harry shot up stairs after her with the agility of a squirrel, and caught her just as she had reached the hall in front of the parlor door.

"Let me go, Harry," she exclaimed, as well as she could speak for laughing.

"Yes, when I've had my kiss," replied the merry boy.

Her head had fallen back over his supporting arm; her red lips were slightly parted, like the petals of a flower; Harry's lips lighted upon them like a butterfly on a rose—if we may indulge in a poetical simile.

At this same instant the parlor door opened, and the face of Miss Gordon looked inquiringly out. Just behind her stood Mr. Livingston.

"What is the matter there?" she asked.

Sally burst from the boy's grasp in blushing confusion, and ran hastily for the stairs. But Harry stood his ground.

"She challenged me," he said, "and we City Hall polishers never go back on a challenge. And I'll tell you what it is, Miss Alice," he continued in a stage whisper, "there's Mr. Livingston behind you looking as if he'd lost his grandmother; and I know he's as sweet on you as honey on pound-cake. Just you take Handsome Harry's advice and challenge him the same way."

If Harry had anything further to say it was cut short by the sudden closure of the parlor door, as the sweet, blushing, confused face withdrew.

"I'll be down in the kitchen, and I ain't in no hurry. You can send for me when you want me," called Harry, through the door, as he walked away.

"If Mr. Livingston don't take the hint after that I wouldn't give a green persimmon for him," so-liloquized the mischievous boy, with a sly laugh to himself.

In fact the interview between the two lovers, previously to Harry's advent on the scene, had been decidedly cold and dry. He was inclined to blame her for too readily crediting him with writing the forged letter, while she declared that he should have demanded an explanation of her demeanor.

"I could not act otherwise than I did," she per-

sisted. "I might, in time, have forgiven; but it is hard to bear to have our idols so rudely shattered." It was at this moment that the Harry and Sally episode occurred. Livingston stood in a quiver of nervous excitement. She had spoken as if he was one of her idols. Was this but a thoughtless figure of speech, or had it a deeper meaning?

There was a warm suggestion in the scene he had just witnessed, and in Harry's mischievous words. There was a warmer suggestion in the confused and blushing face with which she retreated from the door.

How it happened neither of them ever knew. It had something of the unconscious action with which the iron flies to the magnet. But it was certain that before either dreamed of such a thing Alice found herself clasped in Livingston's arms, and his lips pressed in warm kisses on her lovely, rose-flushed face.

But the parlor door had closed, and it may not be quite the fair thing to open it upon these two young lovers. From what we have seen we are sure that it closed in happiness, and closed out all the shadows of misapprehension which were threatening to envelop them.

As a spark sets fire to a barrel of very innocent and very quiet-looking gunpowder, so had Harry's stolen kiss kindled the love that lay concealed in these two young hearts, and brought it flashing up into their eyes and burning upon their lips.

Harry was having so lively a time in the kitchen that he did not know how rapidly time was gliding by, and he could not have guessed that two hours had vanished since that eventful moment when he had seen the flushed face of Alice disappear behind the closing doors.

The quizzical look with which he entered the parlor had, then, nothing to do with the lapse of time, but with some comical thoughts which were wandering through his brain.

An involuntary blush came again into Alice's cheeks as she caught his humorously-questioning glances. He looked from her to Livingston, whose face also was full of happiness.

"That's right up to the mark," he exclaimed joyously. "And if you don't give me an invite to the wedding I'll never speak to you again. And I hope neither of you ain't mad cause I kissed Sally behind the parlor door?"

"To show you that I am not, you handsome, mischievous little tease, I will kiss you right here," exclaimed Alice enthusiastically, "for you are as good and noble-hearted as I am queer."

It was Harry's turn to blush as he felt the pressure of her soft lips. He retreated with a timid dismay unusual to him. But he was not long in recovering his equanimity.

"You needn't be asking for that back," he cried joyously to Livingston, "or claiming that it's yours, for I wouldn't sell it for a barrel full of gold dollars; and if I'm ever goin' to give it away, I'll give it back where it came from."

The hearty laugh which followed these words was succeeded by a long conference, in which Harry's future was the principal subject of discussion. They wished, in their new-felt charity toward all mankind, to do a thousand things for the boy; but they found him particularly obdurate.

"I'm a first-class bootblack, and I wouldn't be worth a cent at anything else," he said. "Guess I'd best stick at what I'm used to."

"But you are getting too old for that business," replied Livingston. "And, besides, you need some education."

"It's time enough for all that," persisted Harry. "Of course, I want a sprinkling of eddication; and maybe I'll soon have to strike out in some new line of business; but just now, if you ain't no serious objection, I'll stick to the box and brush. A bootblack's a gentleman if he ain't a millionaire. He goes where he wants and leaves when he pleases. He works when he feels like it, and he plays when he is in the humor. And he never calls no man master. And if that ain't being a gentleman, then that's all I know 'bout it."

And try as they would they could get no more out of Harry.

An hour or two later of the same day we find Harry at his usual post, near the City Hall, with a throng of his young co-laborers around him.

They are deeply interested in his narrative, for he is giving them a detailed account of the stirring series of adventures through which he has lately passed.

"And now I'll just tell you what it is," says Harry in conclusion. "That's me, Harry Hunter, the bootblack. I ain't a goin' to brag, but I'm a-standing on my dignity, and if there's a boy among you who thinks he can jump higher, run faster, hit harder, or swallow more bean soup, than this 'coon, why just trot him out, that's all. Are you the boy, Bill Blunt, or do you give up the glove?"

"I sell out, Harry, you're the boss." "That's so!" screams little Tim in great enthusiasm. "There ain't a feller of his size can take him down, if you hunt all over the city. Here's three cheers for Handsome Harry, the boss of the boot-blacks!"

The cheers were given with a will, and at this point we will leave them, with our young hero raised to the highest honors in the empire of the box and brush.

And we have also our other characters to take leave of, for the present, at least.

A few words will finish their story. The coming in of his ship, and the recovery of his lost papers, put Mr. Gordon again upon his feet. His health soon came back on the tide of returning prosperity. His business is now fully re-established, and more prosperous than ever, and he is the happiest of easy-going people.

There is only one thing that greatly bothers him, which is that women, and especially his daughter, will have their way.

"But she and my boy Ned are going to be spliced soon," he says, "and then I'll be clear of all that trouble. But if she don't make him back down if he tries to cross her too much, then my experience goes for nothing."

They are not married yet; but, by the way she does as she pleases with her happy lover now, it will not be likely to make him very unhappy, even if she does have her way in the future.

As for Stanway and his associate, they have been punished to the extent of the law for their crime, and are now "chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancy" in the New York penitentiary.

Harry is still the Boss of the Bootblacks, but he goes to school part of his time, and is rapidly progressing in learning. As to his future vocation, that is not yet decided on.

"I don't want no other business," he declares. "I'm just as happy now as a clam at high water. I can wallop the blackin' onto a boot, and fetch out the polish, quicker and livelier than any boy in these parts. And I'm takin' in learnin' faster than an old turkey takes in corn. If that ain't enough to satisfy any reasonable fellow, then I'll sell out!—Here you are, sir! Step up this way! Shine 'em! Shine 'em!"

And no customer can resist the boy's bright face and cheery voice.

THE END.

THE Half-Dime Singer's Library

- 1 WHOA, EMMA! and 59 other Songs.
- 2 CAPTAIN CUFF and 57 other Songs.
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